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Legislative Talking Points

Fellow Faculty and Staff:

We are at the half-way point of the 2014 Kentucky General Assembly now, which means we are spending considerable time in Frankfort. There are some positive things in the proposed budget that we are seeking to sustain, but unfortunately, instead of working toward progress for higher education funding, we again find ourselves working diligently to reverse a proposed budget cut of 2.5 percent. The House of Representatives should complete their work on the budget in the next two weeks or so, and then the budget goes to the Senate. The session is set to end on April 15.

I thought it might be helpful for you to know our key messages as we talk with legislators and House and Senate leadership about the budget:

- 1) Eliminate the 2.5 percent budget cut to higher education. This is a \$1.8 million cut for WKU, bringing the total cuts to WKU's budget to more than \$16 million since 2008.
- 2) Sustain the funding support provided to universities to cover a portion of the KERS mandated retirement contribution. This saves WKU \$1.3 million.
- 3) Fund the proposed state-bonded capital projects. The General Assembly has not funded a capital project on a university campus since the 2006 budget. WKU's project is the \$48 million renovation of the Thompson Complex Center Wing, which we have been seeking since 2008.
- 4) Support a \$2 million increase in the Gatton Academy budget to enable us to grow the Academy from 120 to 200 students as was the original intent. We have a commitment from a private donor to expand the facility, but that commitment is contingent upon the state providing operating funds to support the additional 80 students.

The proposed funding for Bucks for Brains (state matching funds for gifts to endowments) is pertinent to us as well, as our share of the Bucks for Brains pool is about \$2.5 million. The total amount (\$60 million) primarily benefits UK and UofL, so this is a greater priority for them, but one that we support.

Please feel free to communicate with our VP for Public Affairs, Robbin Taylor, at robbin.taylor@wku.edu if you would like to share information about your own communications with legislators you know or if you have thoughts or questions on the budget or other legislation currently moving through the General Assembly.

Thank you.
Gary A. Ransdell