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UA3/9/7 Fall 2014 End of Semester Message

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Fall 2014 End of Semester Message

Fellow Faculty and Staff:

With our Fall 2014 Commencement weekend upon us, I want to take a moment to thank all of our Faculty and Staff for an outstanding fall semester. Our students excelled in the classroom and in their academic endeavors across the globe, and competed well in numerous state, national, and international competitions. We will graduate some 1,300 students this weekend.

SACSCOC Preliminary Report

Just before Thanksgiving, we received word from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) of our off-site committee report. We are in our 10-year reaccreditation cycle. The off-site review is the first stage. It has now been completed. We were required to demonstrate compliance with over 90 principles of compliance. There are 15 core requirements, 11 federal requirements, and 70 or so “comprehensive standards.” I am pleased to say that we received an outstanding preliminary report. Some 400 printed pages were submitted with over 5,000 links to supporting documentation. We were found compliant with all 26 core and federal requirements and all but 4 comprehensive standards. Those 4 were minor, dealing with the need for a few more samples of staff evaluations, a few position descriptions, some learning outcome documentation, and a few faculty credentials. The information related to these four areas is being compiled and submitted in preparation for the onsite visit in April. The offsite review chair and SACSCOC staff were most complimentary of our compliance report. More detailed information will be revealed at today’s Board of Regents’ Academic Affairs Committee Meeting, and in a media release this afternoon. Congratulations to our SACSCOC liaison, Richard Miller and the leadership team led by Provost Emslie and including Beth Laves, Sylvia Gaiko, and Doug McElroy. They were supported by dozens of individuals on various committees who worked diligently for over a year to compile sections of the report and pull it together in a thoughtful manner. Thank you to everyone involved. Well done!

Climate Action Plan

I have asked Christian Ryan, our Sustainability Coordinator, to lead an effort to develop a Climate Action Plan for our campus. A committee has been appointed and will work through the coming year to develop a set of strategies to ensure that our campus is engaged in sustainable behavior.

Winter Term

Winter Term classes begin on January 5 and continue through January 23. Typically, about 10 percent of our student population enrolls in Winter Term. My compliments and appreciation are extended to the faculty and staff who will teach and help administer our 2015 Winter Term. I hope all of you will encourage students to participate in Winter Term. More importantly, please maintain communication with students who are not enrolled in Winter Term over the next several weeks. Our semester break is unusually long for these students as it will be six weeks between tomorrow’s Commencement ceremony and the first day of Spring 2015 classes on January 26. It is important that we keep our students engaged over such a long break and ensure that they all return for the spring semester.

Student Injury Update

On the evening of Wednesday, November 26, a WKU international student from China, Hao Wang, was critically injured when he was hit by a car while riding his bicycle on Morgantown

Road. He remains in critical condition and is in a Nashville hospital where he is being treated for his injuries.

I want to acknowledge Stephanie Sieggreen and Raza Tiwana in the International Student Enrollment Office. They have stayed with Hao and his family at the hospital almost around the clock since the accident. Thanks also to Dr. Haiwang Yuan from our Libraries Department, who has been serving as a translator between our staff and the family, and to our WKU Chinese community who have provided their support to the family as well. I am also grateful to the staff in Student Affairs who have reached out to Hao's roommates to offer support for them.

Finally, I want to recognize the efforts of Congressman Brett Guthrie and U.S. Senator Mitch McConnell and their staffs who helped expedite the process to get Hao's parents to the United States from China so they could be with their son and make decisions about his care in person.

This tragic situation is a difficult reminder that a WKU experience involves many people across our campus and throughout the region and the globe. Thanks to all who have come together to help in many different ways. We will continue to keep Hao and his family in our thoughts and hope that Hao can make a full recovery.

Happy Holidays and Safe Travels

Happy Holidays to everyone. Julie and I hope you have opportunities to rest and share time with family and friends this holiday season. Many of you will be traveling; please do so safely, including those of you who will be attending our bowl game on December 24 against Central Michigan University in the Bahamas.

Let's have two great Commencement ceremonies tomorrow. Happy Holidays and Go Toppers!

Gary Ransdell