

September 2007

Convocation 2007

Gary Ransdell

Western Kentucky University, gary.ransdell@wku.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/president_speeches

Recommended Citation

Ransdell, Gary, "Convocation 2007" (2007). *Presidential Speeches*. Paper 1.
http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/president_speeches/1

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by TopSCHOLAR®. It has been accepted for inclusion in Presidential Speeches by an authorized administrator of TopSCHOLAR®. For more information, please contact topscholar@wku.edu.

**WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY
FACULTY-STAFF CONVOCATION
SEPTEMBER 14, 2007
GARY A. RANSELL**

BECOMING A LEADING AMERICAN UNIVERSITY WITH INTERNATIONAL REACH

Welcome, everyone, to our 2007 opening faculty and staff convocation. We are taking a little bit different approach to this year's convocation in that we are some three weeks into our fall 2007 semester. Orientations for students and new faculty and staff are well behind us and many of you are now familiar with the makeup of your classes and service constituents. To our new faculty and staff, welcome to Bowling Green and to our university family. You are now part of a very special institution—one with a bold vision, high ambition, and strong resolve to become a leading American university with international reach. It is your intellect, energy, passion, and commitment to your discipline, to our goals, and to our ideals that will allow our shared vision to become our shared reality. I look forward to sharing each and every experience with you. In my opinion, you will not find a more dedicated, more loyal, more pleasant, or more capable community of scholars and support personnel anywhere in the realm of higher education.

For the first time in my ten years as president, we voluntarily cancelled classes in the absence of an emergency or weather concerns, so I appreciate everyone's attendance this morning as I am sure our students appreciate the chance to sleep, although I am certain that most are taking advantage of an extra early morning hour to be in the library. Our rationale, however, for choosing this date will become a bit more clear in the next few minutes as we coordinate some very important announcements with events scheduled later today.

At the outset, I ask each of you to take a moment to fill out the ten-question instrument which you received as you entered this morning. This measure of our optimism has become an annual gauge of our psychological pulse. We will collect these as we leave this morning.

Introductions

Seated with me on the stage this morning are members of the administrative council and leadership on our Board of Regents. I am very fortunate to serve a governing board which is absolutely dedicated to the transformation that has shaped nearly every move we have made these

last ten years, and to which the board has pledged itself in our new strategic plan that takes us through 2012. As I communicate with my colleagues across the nation, I am struck by how few of them have the good fortune to work with a focused, cohesive, objective, and outcomes rather than means-oriented governing board. Such is our fortune at WKU. Please welcome the chair and vice-chair of our governing board, Ms. Lois Gray of Vine Grove and Mr. Jim Meyer of Bowling Green.

I would also like to recognize our student regent and student government association president, Ms. Jeanne Johnson; staff regent, Ms. Tamela Smith; and the chair of the university senate who has been a welcome participant in recent board meetings, Ms. Julie Shadoan. Thank you, Jeanne, Tamela, and Julie.

Some of our stage guests will be recognized later in the program, but I would also like to acknowledge and thank members of the Administrative Council for their dedicated service to this institution. We are experiencing a rare sustained phenomenon of consistency and continuity with this group. I am, indeed, fortunate to work with a talented and energetic group of seasoned educators. They are seated on the stage—our Administrative Council.

2006-07 achievements

Much has occurred since we were all together one year ago. It would be impossible to acknowledge all of the significant national and international achievements of our faculty, staff, and students over the last year, but the list is long and impressive.

Some new achievements in the last year are, however, particularly noteworthy. They include the dramatic growth of international prestigious scholarship winners among our student population; legislative authorization for the Kentucky Academy of Math and Science—followed by a gift of \$4 million by Mr. Bill Gatton—and the welcoming of 120 of Kentucky's most gifted and talented high school juniors and seniors to our campus. These are now WKU students who will raise the tide of intellectual stimulation and achievement in this academic community. This is important for Kentucky, for WKU, and for these students who will forever change the intellectual capacity of all three. In a few short years, our Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE) program have moved from being an experiment in entrepreneurial behavior among our students to an organization which finished second nationally last year in competition among most American colleges and universities. And, yes, the past year included moving our football program to the highest level of I-A competition. And, season ticket sales have grown from a previous high of 1,800 to over 9,000

this week for this season. Faculty, staff, and students representing these and so many other areas are working hard to pursue the national prominence we seek for WKU and to sustain a high level of achievement consistent with our vision to be a leading American university with international reach. Congratulations to everyone. We are performing at a very high level.

Ten years

Two days ago was the ten-year anniversary of my appointment as president by the Board of Regents. Because of the progress we have made and the optimistic outlook for the future, the cohesion of this university family, and the support of our board, we truly are just getting started, and I am absolute in my resolve to spend the rest of my academic career working with you to help WKU achieve its vision. In fact, the board leadership and I have reached an agreement which will go before the full board in November, which is structured to take my term as president through 2022. I will be seventy then, and I intend to look back on 25 years of transformational outcomes characteristic of those outlined by the board of regents prior to my appointment on September 12, 1997.

As part of our progress report which will also be ready for the next Board of Regents' meeting on November 2, we will highlight some of the measurables which, together, we have achieved these last ten years. I do take pride in what each of you has helped achieve during this period of time.

The list is, indeed, evidence that a transformation is under way. It includes 25 percent growth in enrollment, 125 percent growth in the campus budget, 200 percent growth in sponsored research and public service, 478 percent growth in annual gift deposits, 500 percent growth in the endowment, 23 percent growth in increased graduation rates, 13 percent growth in student retention, and national prominence in several academic programs, including the state's only academic program to achieve a national number one ranking—that is, of course, our School of Journalism and Broadcasting. And, as you know, we have also become the top American university in forensics. These are the statistics.

Equally important has been the refinement of historically strong academic programs and the introduction of new academic programs and partnerships which are driving the economy of our region, improving the quality of life of those within our reach, and defining our emerging mission of applied research and civic engagement. The achievement, however, to which most people relate,

because you can see, feel, and touch it, is the physical rebuilding of our campus. Since 1997, we have completed 24 construction projects totaling \$195 million with a long list of projects under way and several new projects on the drawing board.

We have also formalized our strategic resolve to the commercialization of our intellectual property and its transfer to the work place. We are in the process of completing our first spin-off company which will be announced later this fall.

Suffice it to say that the foundation for a new strategic plan is well laid and the confidence for a bold vision to be a leading American university with international reach is well-grounded.

Strategic plan

You have with you this morning the first public distribution of our new strategic plan. This plan will guide us for the next five years. By achieving the performance indicators included in this plan, we will achieve a sufficient number of measurable outcomes to validate that a true institutional transformation has occurred. I want to compliment Dr. Dennis George, the assistant vice president for Institutional Effectiveness, and the Administrative Council for devoting considerable time, discussion, debate, and commitment to both the process and to the plan itself. All of the individuals who share the stage with me today have been directly involved in the creation of this document, whether or not it related directly to specific duties and responsibilities. This has truly been a collaborative team effort to which there has been a shared commitment from the governing board through each division of the university.

The most difficult part of this process was narrowing the list of performance indicators to a select few. We discussed hundreds of goals, objectives, and outcomes which are important to each division, but in the spirit of producing a reasonable document to be embraced by all of our public and private constituents, we chose to focus on a relatively small list of 147 performance indicators which support the five goals outlined on page three.

Priorities

Without taking the time this morning to be too specific, it is important to outline nine strategic priorities in this plan. Given the confidence and the knowledge brought by the achievements of the last ten years and, given our strong resolve to focus on areas which are within our power to control and achieve, we are staking our transformation for the next five years on this

plan and nine primary points of progress. The underlining principle in this plan is the inherent philosophy to control our own destiny and nurture entrepreneurialism uncommon in public higher education. The nine priorities are: 1) compensation for faculty and staff; 2) academic quality; 3) the Honors College; 4) study abroad and internationalization; 5) graduate studies; 6) the library; 7) physical plant improvement and growth; 8) enrollment growth; and 9) regional campus development.

In the plan, which you have today, you will find the performance indicators related to each of these nine areas, among many other elements of the plan. Success with this plan will require focus, resolve, and resources. Achievement throughout this plan is entirely up to us. Any bold vision or organizational intent starts with talented people who have the heart, the intellect, the energy, and the passion to achieve. We could devote resources to any one, two, or three of these areas and claim a high level of satisfaction and success. It will, however, take sustained performance of what we have put in motion the last ten years and sustained progress in these nine areas in order for the claim of transformation and national prominence to be valid by 2012. Brief clarification is in order.

Compensation

Compensation of our faculty and staff will be critical to ensure the continuous building of our essential human dynamics and capacity. We intend to average a faculty/staff annual salary increase well above the rate of inflation, we intend to devote money in each of the next five budget cycles to market adjustments and specific pressure points, and we intend to maintain a solvent health insurance program and sound retirement support.

Academic quality

No institution can become a leading American university with international reach without a high level of academic quality. While we have pockets of strength throughout our campus and a fine regional reputation, we must grow and excel in areas that stretch us and our students, create economic vitality for our region, and strengthen our reputation among our peers in higher education. These first two priorities, compensation and academic quality, are intrinsically linked and well addressed by performance indicators in this plan.

I do, however, want to spend a bit more time on academic quality. Our pursuit of academic quality is framed by the complex nature of our student body. This strategic plan is predicated on our philosophy that we will sell value. That we will price ourselves competitively in the marketplace. That while we will keep tuition reasonable within our market, we know we cannot achieve our objectives for our students and for the institution by trying to be the best financial bargain. We intend to provide the best in higher education in Kentucky. We know our students are seeking high value for reasonable cost. We continue to be reinforced by the high scores our students give us on exit surveys.

Yet, we know from formal responses to our university experience survey that we have to balance accessibility among those whose capacity is below the norm, against those whose capacity raises the norm. As we attract more and more students at the high end of the academic spectrum—through the Gatton Academy of Math and Science and through the Honors College—we know that we will be the subject of conjecture that WKU is too easily accessed by those of lesser academic ability. This criticism will remain both true and fair. For all that we do to attract and stimulate the gifted and talented students, we must also be dedicated to providing the means through which the average, but motivated, student achieves his or her dreams. Our business plan is predicated on enrollment growth which is dependent on broad access. In short, we cannot serve the best and brightest well unless we also embrace those lesser capable who need us the most.

We shall continue to dedicate ourselves to retaining and graduating the students we accept and enroll and to raising the intellectual environment for significantly larger numbers of gifted and talented students. We will achieve balance between being open and accessible for the majority of the students and becoming the intellectual destination point for the best students.

We must also be part of the solution not only for ourselves but for public education—even at the elementary and secondary level. We must strengthen the science, technology, engineering, and math disciplines. We must grow math and science teachers—especially at WKU given our history of teacher education. We must create new leadership models for public education. We must grow bilingual teachers for increasingly diverse public schools. We must have such purpose in our work, while we produce the most and the best teachers, and create the terminal degree opportunities for public schools and community and technical college educators.

The Honors College

The Honors College is a natural point of emphasis for us given our long history with our Center for Gifted Studies and the new Gatton Academy of Math and Science. The Honors College represents the single quickest way to achieve the distinction of being a leading American university with international reach. Creation of the Honors College will challenge our faculty and students to attract peers of the highest order, but it will also challenge the administration to garner the facilities and the resources to be successful with the state's first true Honors College and do so in a manner that causes our reputation to exceed the state's boundaries.

In order to achieve our vision, we, in this strategic plan, will dedicate ourselves to becoming the intellectual heartbeat of Kentucky. Our state has limited intellectual capacity because of history, geography, and relatively small population, but its limited capacity is rich in individual potential. Our Center for Gifted Studies, the Gatton Academy of Math and Science in Kentucky, and our new Honors College represent three intellectual initiatives which exist on no other campus in Kentucky and which put us in the enviable position of defining the intellectual heartbeat of Kentucky. Through these three programs, we will identify human talent, recruit it, nurture it, stimulate it, and send it into the world and, perhaps, to stay home in Kentucky to do good work.

What we are doing to identify seventh and eighth graders through the Duke Talent Identification Program, the manner in which we are embracing bright young minds through SCATS, VAMPY, and Super Saturdays is both unique and monumental for our state's gifted and talented youth. It is also the means through which we are identifying the students who will seek to enroll in the Academy for Math and Science. One hundred and twenty-one were selected and one hundred and twenty are now spending their junior and senior years living in Schneider Hall and studying with you, our faculty, and with your students in our classrooms and laboratories. They are now WKU freshmen and sophomores. The academic credentials of the WKU student body just took a major leap forward.

Our challenge now is to make WKU the destination point for baccalaureate and graduate degree completion among students attending the Academy. These students will be recruited out of the Academy by the best colleges and universities in the nation. They will not stay here automatically or by default. We must create a strong Honors College. We must create scholarship opportunities for baccalaureate and graduate programs commensurate with offers they will receive from institutions further along on the "leading American university" scale. If we have any chance

of fulfilling one of the goals of the Academy, to serve as an economic development strategy, then we must keep as many of these students in Kentucky as possible. Not only for their baccalaureate and graduate studies, but for their careers as well, therefore, the Honors College is, indeed, both a pragmatic priority and a self-serving initiative.

We have made great strides. This past year, we had a 100 percent retention of Honors students from first to second year. We doubled our first year Honors enrollment over last year with 350 new Honors students this fall. We have dedicated ourselves to achieving 1,000 students in the Honors College by 2012. We will dedicate space in soon-to-be-designed new Grise Hall to the Honors College. We have dedicated three of our best residence halls to Honors students. We have signed an agreement with the University of Evansville for Honors students to attend Harlaxton College in Graham, England. This is to ensure that all Honors students have a semester abroad in a nation or on a continent which correlates with their chosen field of study. If such a dynamic is not practical, then a semester at Harlaxton awaits. This three-legged stool of Gifted Studies, the Academy, and the Honors College is the pedestal on which we will stake our claim in this strategic plan to become the intellectual heartbeat of Kentucky.

Study abroad and internationalization

If we are serious about those three words “with international reach,” then study abroad and internationalization must be paramount in this strategic plan. Faculty, student, and staff engagement throughout the globe will create a culture throughout our campus that will sew the seeds of international confidence among our students and, consequently, prepare them for success anywhere on the globe. Although an international reach is essential to achieving the first four words—a leading American university—it is the international component which may be the most transformational opportunity before us.

All of us are part of a larger and inextricably connected global community. From the worldwide tragedy and threat of terrorism to the rapid economic rise of China, India, and other nations on the other side of the globe, we must all realize that ignorance or neglect of a global focus would have profound consequences which could be both dangerous and neutralizing. Our focus on internationalism, however, is not simply about competition or national security. It is about our responsibility to ensure that our students grow comfortable and confident in a world in which they will inevitably be personally and professionally connected when they leave us. Familiarity breeds

embracement and understanding. We can cause the world to become less vast, remote, and abstract and more within our reach as a family of faculty, staff, and students. The world has amazing things to offer unless you choose not to access them. That is what each of you and each of your students have the right to expect from WKU. Our students need to be comfortable and confident participating in the international community and the spoken and unspoken languages and traditions with define it. Let's inspire our students to see beyond the bounds of the perspectives with which they have grown up simply by virtue of where they have lived.

Let's produce a new generation of college graduates capable of addressing the global challenges it faces now and will continue to face for the rest of their lives. It will have risks. It will not be easy or inexpensive, but the time has come for us to acknowledge what it means to educate students for the global environment of the 21st century and to press ahead in a pervasive manner.

Our student and faculty exchange programs with other universities can be a dramatic public diplomacy tool. When international students study on our campus, they experience the best of our American democracy and generally have a much more positive and a long-lasting appreciation and understanding of our nation but it is a two-way street. Americans do not know enough about other countries and cultures. Let's be a part of the solution and send our faculty, staff, and students far and wide.

Graduate Studies

The two areas—Graduate Studies and the library—are fundamentally critical to life at a comprehensive university and are essential to an institution seeking to be a leading American university. Much of our applied research context begins at the undergraduate level, but the ability to attract and retain quality graduate students and faculty is fundamental to the shaping of our applied research agenda. We also have a critical responsibility to public education and to the business and health communities to provide the graduate credentials necessary for career advancement and success. We will address our deficiencies in graduate assistant funding and fellowships with this strategic plan.

The library

The library, however it may be changing the nature of its collections and assets, still remains the central source of information necessary to learning. A primary focus for the next five years will be recurring budget support for operations, journals, acquisitions, and other needs of the library.

Campus improvements

Improvement in growth in our physical plant is both daunting and critical. We just celebrated our Centennial, but we did so in some tired outdated facilities. Our physical space in large measure defines how we are viewed by those who seek to be a part of this family and how we are self-actualized in this place we call our campus. In order to be competitive, let alone be nationally respected, we simply must have state-of-the-art facilities, including classrooms, laboratories, libraries, residence halls, restaurants, administrative work space, and athletic facilities. All of which must be complimented and served by dependable heating and cooling systems, information technology infrastructure, and pleasant grounds which are both comfortable and inspirational. Two points specifically came to mind—first, we have placed some outdoor art on campus and we will continue to do so throughout the coming year. The aesthetic value of our campus environment should be a priority for us all. Secondly, we have laid 33 miles of cable to create a wireless environment. Yes, it takes lots of wire to be wireless! This and 782 access points have turned our campus into a state-of-the-art mobile learning environment. Our campus is part of our character. We have uniqueness which we will nurture. It is my resolve to ensure that the pride we share in this place will not only be sustained but deepened.

Enrollment growth

Enrollment growth, and more importantly—degree productivity, is essential. We will not experience the dramatic growth of the last ten years, but our numbers this fall are 19,200 strong and we must sustain forward movement for several reasons. It is essential to our institutional self-esteem and psychological sense of progress and accomplishment. It is also essential to the financial model on which this plan is based. It is demanded by the Commonwealth of Kentucky which has set extremely aggressive enrollment targets, particularly for WKU. Our goal of 20,000 students by 2012 is not so daunting when compared to the goal of 27,481 undergraduate students which CPE expects us to achieve by 2020.

Regional campuses

Further development of our campuses in Elizabethtown, Owensboro, and Glasgow is critical to our mission to serve our primary service area but also to enrollment strategies and our responsibilities for the economic development of Kentucky. We simply must expand the access, the curriculum, and the impact of these campuses for both offensive and defensive purposes. Dynamics and demographics in these regions demand it. If we forsake our responsibilities, then someone else will fill the void and we will suffer in the marketplace. Our challenge in Owensboro is to reverse a trend of declining baccalaureate and graduate degree holders. In Elizabethtown, it is to respond to a dramatic influx of new white-collar jobs which demand baccalaureate and graduate credentials as part of the base realignment and closing (BRAC) actions at Ft. Knox. In Glasgow, it is to relieve pressure from high demand and limited space as that campus grows.

The challenge

Higher education sells hope and fear. We are doing well with the hope factor. We are an optimistic campus. We promise great things to our students and constituents. Students are often driven by fear that if they do not access what we have to offer, their lives will not be as enriched. I, too, live with the fear that if we do not do the things we talk about here this morning, then we will become both irrelevant and inconsequential. In the macro sense, higher education's failure to drive our economy, to respond to national security needs, and to raise our collective intellectual capacity will cause our nation and our people to suffer, relegate our American democracy to secondary status in the world stage, and bring compromise to the quality of life we seek to enjoy. In the micro sense, if we at WKU do not transform ourselves in ways that we discuss today, or in ways which come to light in the years ahead, then we, too, will return to our complacent past, lose hope, and miss the opportunity to add value to the degrees we award. A well-conceived and thoroughly executed strategic plan is necessary if we are to fulfill our mission and achieve our bold vision to become a leading American university with international reach.

Achieving that vision means focusing our WKU intellectual and human capacity on identifying and solving problems. It means that we help people grow and succeed. It means that everyone in the WKU family creates and exudes confidence. That is the WKU Spirit. That is how we win together. That is what a leading American university with international reach does, and you are the means through which that gets done.

Financial capacity

The part of this strategic plan which sets it apart from the original “Challenging the Spirit” strategic plan, which we created in 1998 and modified a few times since, is the financial foundation on which the plan rests. Our strategic plan is unusual when compared to most planning documents in higher education. First of all, everything is measurable. If we cannot measure it, then we do not know whether or not we have done it. Secondly, we will continue our habit of reporting our level of achievement on an annual basis. Now, however, we have taken the step which most institutions are not willing to take. We are stating how the resources to achieve the plan will be achieved, and how those resources will be spent to achieve the stated performance.

The last few pages of the strategic plan present the business portion of the document. Success requires knowledge of the source of the required revenue. Pages 22 and 23 outline the additional investments which will be needed to achieve our priority goals by 2012. These resources will come from state and federal appropriations, private support, and our own campus budget. Considerable money will be spent on many other things, but these are the areas on which we will be focused in the appropriation of the new revenues we will generate over the next five years. Both recurring and nonrecurring commitments are outlined. The recurring sums will be achieved over the five-year period of time, which means by 2012 we intend to be budgeting an additional recurring amount equal to the number in the right-hand column in each of the areas outlined. The nonrecurring column outlines what we intend to spend on a one-time basis in the pursuit of the stated performance indicators.

The last page makes some necessary assumptions for anticipated revenue. In order to target the means through which the capacity for success will be achieved, we are assuming a 6 percent tuition increase on an annual basis, and we are projecting minimum enrollment growth of 150 full-time equivalents each year for the next five years. This is the minimum number on which the financial model is based. Regarding tuition revenue, if this financial model is based on 6 percent growth in tuition each year, then one could assume that any additional agency debt for capital projects which we finance ourselves would have to come from new tuition revenue above and beyond this 6 percent projection. That being said, we have a strong resolve and will likely be required to keep tuition increases in the single-digit range during this period of time.

The financial model also assumes an increase in state appropriations of 7.5 percent annually. This is the element in which we have the highest degree of uncertainty because this is the one element which is beyond our ability to control. It is dependent upon a stable to good economy and a political environment favorable to the support of higher education. Given our performance in the variables which drive the higher education funding model and the size of our institution, we have a reasonable level of confidence in this assumption.

On the expenditure side, you can see that we project devoting between \$3.5 million and \$4.5 million to fixed cost increases each year through 2012. We are also projecting a 4 percent merit compensation increase for faculty and staff, which will be supported by an additional target of \$7.2 million to help achieve competitive compensation for faculty and staff. These numbers are found under 3A of the financial implication's page.

When revenue assumptions are calculated and base operations and compensation are funded, we then arrive at a number for funding strategic initiatives each year. It is this dollar margin in each of the five years that we will devote to funding the priorities outlined on the financial implication's page of the document.

Controlling our own destiny

The strategic plan and its financial underpinning, which we have shared this morning, will guide our actions over the next five years. There is one monumental variable, however, which will fuel our efforts.

In the last ten years, we have become less dependent on state funding and much more dependant on financial variables within our control. Tuition has become our primary revenue source, sponsored research has become the third largest revenue source for us, and auxiliary and business enterprises across campus are providing the capacity to achieve many of our campus goals. Private support is the area in which we were underachieving the most ten years ago, but where we have the opportunity to achieve the most in the next five years.

We have made great strides these last ten years in term of annual gift deposits, the number of major gift donors, and the size and consequence of our endowment. As we learned in our last capital campaign, from 1998 to 2003, the impact of the \$102 million we raised was significant in terms of endowed faculty positions, endowed scholarships, and programmatic support. What was even more important for us in that experience, however, was the manner in which our public

perception changed. People began to read about us because people were investing in us—and handsomely so. We were creating academic strengths. We were bringing in new talent through new endowment programs. We were recruiting students with new found scholarship capacity that, heretofore, would have been impossible. Our institutional self-esteem has changed these last ten years in large measure because of the confidence which the private sector has expressed in us and in which we have grown comfortable in our own minds. The psychological values of a bold and aggressive capital campaign have immeasurable value in the life of a university.

Fortunately, we are located in a nation and a society that places a premium on philanthropic support. Our nation's hospitals, churches, and public charities all benefit from our tax policies and the generosity of the American people. Few benefit, however, as much as our colleges and universities. In many ways, this strategic plan forces us to operate more like a private university than a public university. Our approach to private support is entirely consistent with that self-defined phenomenon.

The future is now

Since our last campaign ended on June 30, 2003, we have spent the last four years working with donors to complete pledges made during that campaign, conducting thorough research to identify new gift prospects, and building relationships that will bear fruit for years to come. We have been doing these things knowing that the next campaign was inevitable. Well, the future is now.

On July 1, 2005, we began putting the infrastructure together and quietly raising new gifts to floor our next capital campaign. We have announced many of those gifts in recent months. We also recruited two gentlemen, who join me on the stage this morning, and who are serving as co-chairs of the capital campaign we announce today. Mr. Don Vitale of Bowling Green and Mr. Rick Guillaume of Louisville are leading a campaign cabinet of 35 prominent leaders who care deeply about this university. This campaign cabinet has been meeting for the last eighteen months in anticipation of today's announcement and of the achievement of our 2012 campaign goal. The strategic plan which you hold in your hands is accompanied by a booklet called *A New Century of Spirit*, which you will receive on your way out this morning and which describes a new capital campaign that will generate \$200 million in new gifts and pledges by 2012.

\$200 million

On behalf of Don and Rick and the campaign cabinet, and all the donors who have contributed and will contribute to the achievement of this goal, I am proud to publicly announce this \$200 million goal for the first time this morning to our most important audience—our faculty and staff—and to correlate this strategic plan and this capital campaign as an interlocking means and end. In one sense, the strategic plan is the means through which benefactors will gain the necessary confidence to invest in a strategically sound, ambitious, and worthwhile endeavor. The campaign itself, on the other hand, will create much of the financial capacity and the intrinsic confidence through which the strategic plan will be achieved—all with complete fulfillment by 2012. Don and Rick will join Tom Hiles, Lois Gray, Jim Meyer, and me in a few minutes in a conversation with the media. We will also welcome our President's Circle donors attending our annual President's Circle Gala on campus this evening. You will also be hearing from Jeanne Fiene and Brian Kuster who will be co-chairing the faculty and staff segment of the campaign.

The quiet phase - \$91 million

We are also announcing today that during the quiet phase since July 2005, we have been fortunate to receive over \$91 million in new gifts in pledges toward our goal of \$200 million. Therefore, with five years to go, we fully expect to raise the remaining \$109 million, to build an endowment of \$200 million, and to raise our annual cash flow from gift deposits to over \$20 million a year.

The campus family

The primary reason that we are holding this convocation today, on the occasion of this announcement and of our annual President's Circle Gala, is to ensure that you, our faculty and staff, are the first to whom this announcement is made. You are the first to understand that you and our students will be the direct beneficiaries of the psychological and financial fruits of this capital campaign. That the transformation about which we have spoken so much this morning will be supported by those who believe in you, who trust you, who are willing to invest in you, and know that through you WKU will, indeed, become a leading American university with international reach.

Don and Rick, thank you and your colleagues on the campaign cabinet for your leadership, your efforts, and your personal support of the achievement of this worthy goal. I dedicate myself and the capacities of my office to the achievement of this goal. No one will take more pride and satisfaction in its achievement. No collection of people are more deserving than the faculty and staff gathered before you today, and the students to whom we dedicate our combined professional and philanthropic efforts.

A New Century of Spirit

Our founder, Henry Hardin Cherry, would like what we have become in our first century and what we will become in our “New Century of Spirit.”

(campaign video)

Hard optimism

Last year I circulated, among you, the ten-point questionnaire which you once again hold in your hands. I trust by now that each of you has completed this instrument so that we can measure our progress from last year. Just leave the completed sheet with a Spirit Master as you receive the “New Century of Spirit” booklet on your way out. Last year, 477 of you completed this survey. Seventy-eight percent of you responded with either a four or a five on each of the ten questions. Your response assured me that we do, indeed, have hard optimism on this campus, that our energy level is high, that we are a place which breathes creativity and innovation, that our “can-do” attitude is strong, that you embrace ambition and hope, and that we are a place of happiness with a deep competitive spirit and a strong sense that we can get the job done. That is what we can sell in the private sector to gift prospects, in Frankfort, in Washington, and in the community of higher education. That is what we can use to extend our international reach and to bring the globe to us. There will be no room for complacency. There can be nothing slow or apprehensive about us. We will not tolerate mission creep or even mission gallop. We are in full mission sprint to achieve a complete and lasting transformation. We will build on recent success. We will remain a very hot campus with a very high cool factor. We will merge our own abilities and commitment with the support of the private sector, our friends in Frankfort, and in Washington to become a leading American university with international reach. Thank you.

Recognitions

As we conclude this morning, I want to present the annual awards we convey at our convocation each year—the Spirit of WKU Award and three President’s Awards for Diversity.

The Spirit of WKU Award is selected from your recommendations by past recipients of this award. The 2007 winner is Dr. Carl Kell. Carl is a professor of communication. He has taught at WKU for 35 years. Carl founded the “Spirit Masters” in 1980 and served as their advisor until 2003. He was a founding member of the present day Medical Center 10K Classic and served as executive director of the Bowling Green/Warren County International Festival from 1990-1995. Carl is legendary for his passion and commitment to students and to the profession of communication. Dr. Carl Kell.

There are three President’s Awards for Diversity which we bestow each year; one for employees, one for students, and a community award. The 2007 award winners, as selected by our diversity enhancement committee, are as follows:

The employee winner is Dr. Jane Olmsted. Dr. Jane Olmsted is an associate professor in the English Department and the director of the Women’s Studies Program. She actively participates in programs that bring diversity to our campus. Jane has participated in the celebration of Black History Month for many years. Two years ago, she came up with an idea of a film series that would run throughout the month of February. Last year, Jane headed up an ad-hoc English Department committee to address diversity. This resulted in a “read-out” of black literature, a flyer highlighting English courses that include diversity, and initiated a conversation about how to work with other units to improve outreach to African American students. A highlight of Jane’s activities is a summer camp for low-income women and their children. Jane Olmsted doesn’t “work at” diversity—she insists on celebrating it every day. Dr. Jane Olmsted.

The student award winner is graduate student, Ms. Ameerah Cetawayo. She is an African American woman, who was raised Muslim, converted to Christianity as a teenager and speaks Spanish and Japanese. Ameerah helped revitalize WKU’s Minority Communicators, an organization for students of color within the School of Journalism and Broadcasting. She gives back every year to the WKU journalism workshop for minority students. For the past two years, Ameerah has acted as a mentor for freshman experience classes. She also has sat on committees for the Honors program, socio-cultural, and academic success committees for Housing and Residence

Life. She graduated cum laude from the WKU Honors program. As a newspaper and broadcast journalist, she is very sensitive to how Muslim Americans are portrayed in the media. She has been an award-winning reporter and anchor on the student television newscast, which airs live on the campus residence life cable channel. Her first job post-undergrad was as the anchor for “New Horizons” a public affairs talk show program that aired on WBKO-ABC that addressed minority issues and as the public affairs intern for the Bowling Green Human Rights Commission. Ameerah is currently the business reporter for the Daily News and weekend/fill-in anchor for WKCT-AM. Ameerah has taken every opportunity to make her educational experience the very best possible, including a semester of study in Japan and England where she studied journalism in both places. Ms. Ameerah Cetawayo.

The community award winner is Mrs. Maxine Ray. Mrs. Maxine Ray, a folklorist and historian with the Jonesville community awareness project and a facilitator for presentations about Jonesville, she created a scholarship in memory of Jonesville which will be issued by the Folklore Department. Presently, she is working on a manuscript about the history of blacks in Warren County and conducting interviews to document the history of other counties in Kentucky. She also was a contributing author for the “50 years of Integration” commemorative book. Maxine is the president for the Center for Community and Family Initiative which is a mentoring program for children. She is currently in the process of establishing a summer program to teach foreign languages, advanced math, and host other activities for children. Maxine is also the vice president with New Era Planning, and she is on the committee for the Shake Rag revitalization project. Mrs. Maxine Ray.