1998

UA3/9/5 Russellville Speech

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PLEASED TO BE IN RUSSELLVILLE. THIS COMMUNITY AND THE COUNTY
HAVE BEEN--AND CONTINUE TO BE--VERY IMPORTANT TO WESTERN. I'M
IMPRESSED WITH THE "NEW" ROAD BETWEEN HERE AND BOWLING GREEN. IT
BEATS THE OLD 68-80 TWO-LANE ROAD TO BOWLING GREEN!
ONE OF WESTERN'S DISTINCTIVE TREASURES IS OUR KENTUCKY LIBRARY
AND MUSEUM WHICH CHARTS AND DOCUMENTS THE HISTORY OF OUR STATE--
PARTICULARLY SOUTH CENTRAL AND WESTERN KENTUCKY

1. MARY JULIA NEAL (DIED 1995) WAS A LOGAN COUNTY NATIVE (BORN IN
AUBURN) AND A WESTERN GRADUATE AND FACULTY MEMBER. SHE
SERVED AS DIRECTOR OF THE KENTUCKY LIBRARY AND MUSEUM FROM
1964-1972. SHE WAS AN AUTHORITY ON THE SHAKERS, AND WROTE
SEVERAL BOOKS ABOUT THEM, INCLUDING A HISTORY OF THE SOUTH
UNION SHAKERS CALLED BY THEIR FRUITS. THE KENTUCKY BUILDING
ALSO HAS LOTS OF MATERIALS ABOUT THE SHAKERS AND SHAKER
ARTIFACTS WHICH WERE DONATED BY MISS NEAL.

2. THE KENTUCKY BUILDING HAS THE DIARIES OF FANNIE MORTON BRYAN,
BORN IN RUSSELLVILLE IN 1889 PRIOR TO BECOMING A "RESPECTABLE"
SCHOOLTEACHER, SHE WAS A "DEBUTANTE" WHO KEPT A DIARY OF HER
 ADOLESCENT COURTSHIP AND FLIRTING EXPERIENCES, WHICH GIVES US
INSIGHT INTO THESE KINDS OF SOCIAL CUSTOMS AT THE TURN OF THE
CENTURY. SUE LYNN STONE HAS DONE A LOT OF RESEARCH ON FANNIE
AND I THINK, PUBLISHED AN ARTICLE A FEW YEARS AGO. FANNIE
GRADUATED FROM LOGAN FEMALE COLLEGE IN RUSSELLVILLE--A DONOR
ALSO GAVE THE MUSEUM A SCHOLARSHIP MEDAL FROM THIS SCHOOL THAT DATES TO 1914.

3. THE MUSEUM HAS SEVERAL QUILTS FROM LOGAN COUNTY ONE DATES TO THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY AND IS ATTRIBUTED TO REBECCA WASHINGTON, WHO LIVED NEAR RUSSELLVILLE AND WHOSE HUSBAND WAS A FIRST COUSIN ONCE REMOVED TO GEORGE WASHINGTON.

4. THE LATE RENA MILLIKEN (WHO LIVED IN LOGAN COUNTY AND WROTE FOR THE LOCAL NEWSPAPER) DONATED NUMEROUS ARTIFACTS TO THE MUSEUM OVER A PERIOD OF YEARS, PARTICULARLY CLOTHING AND TEXTILES.

5. THE FELTS LOG HOUSE, WHICH SITS OUT FRONT OF THE KENTUCKY BUILDING, WAS DONATED BY SAM HOUSTON WATKINS, A FORMER STATE LEGISLATOR WITH TIES TO ELIZABETHTOWN AND LOGAN COUNTY.

6. THE MUSEUM HAS A RARE "RANDOLPH JACKET" AND BLANKET, USED BY A JEFFERSON COUNTY NATIVE WHO FOUGHT WITH THE FAMED ORPHAN BRIGADE IN THE CIVIL WAR. THEY WERE DONATED BY A DESCENDANT WHO LIVES IN RUSSELLVILLE.


AND WHAT ABOUT ATHLETIC TIES TO LOGAN COUNTY?
LILLIE MASON, 1982-85, WOMEN'S BASKETBALL (ORIGINALLY FROM
OLMSTED)
FINLEY BAIRD, 1984-87, WOMEN'S BASKETBALL (CURRENTLY ON
UNIVERSITY STAFF)
FORREST KILLEBREW, 1977-81, TRACK
FRED TISDALE, 1985-88, BASKETBALL
ALLYSON HARTLEY, 1989-92, GOLF
PHILLIP HATCHETT, 1980-83, GOLF
JOHN MARKHAM, 1990-93, BASEBALL

BUT THIS IS WHERE IT GETS PERSONAL FOR ME. MY TIES TO
RUSSELLVILLE, AND THOSE OF MY WIFE, RUN DEEP. THE NUMBER ONE
STUDENT ATHLETE WHO NEVER TIRED OF PROCLAIMING HIS RUSSELLVILLE
BRAD WAS ONE OF MY BEST FRIENDS AT WESTERN AND A PARTICIPANT IN MY
MARRIAGE TO JULIE BUSH IN 1972. I MET BRAD THROUGH MY ROOMMATE DURING MY FRESHMAN YEAR—J.D. BAYLESS FROM RUSSSELLVILLE, AND MY
ROOMMATES MY SOPHOMORE YEAR—LARRY JOHNSON AND JIM LUCKETT, BOTH
OF RUSSELLVILLE. IT GETS BETTER! MY FIRST JOB AT WESTERN WAS IN THE
UNIVERSITY-SCHOOL RELATIONS OFFICE WHERE I WORKED FOR ROY
REYNOLDS, WHO WAS PRINCIPAL AT RUSSELLVILLE HIGH SCHOOL BEFORE HIS
CAREER AT WESTERN! THROUGH ROY, I MET MARK REYNOLDS AND, AFTER HE
MARRIED JEAN, MY WIFE BEGAN TEACHING AT RUSSELLVILLE ELEMENTARY

Carol who took care of our first born son while Julie was commuting to
Russellville Middle School where she taught for three years! It was then that
SCHOOL WITH JEAN—THEY BECAME CAR POOL BUDDIES AND THE REYNOLDS
FAMILY—BOTH GENERATIONS—ROY AND CAROL AND MARK AND JEAN AND
CHILDREN HAVE BEEN DEAR FRIENDS EVER SINCE!

BUT ENOUGH ABOUT MY PERSONAL AFFECTIONS FOR THIS COMMUNITY
LET'S TALK ABOUT LOGAN COUNTY AND WESTERN:

BUT LET ME FOCUS FOR A MINUTE ON WESTERN IN 1998:

■ CURRENTLY RECEIVE ABOUT 4,000 APPLICANTS
■ WE ARE ADMITTING SOME 86% AND ENROLLING 65% OF THOSE WE
  ACCEPT—WE HAVE JUST ENROLLED A FRESHMAN CLASS OF 2,300.
■ AVERAGE ACT SCORE IS 21.1 WHICH I UNDERSTAND IS GOING TO BE
  UP NEARLY 1/2 A POINT THIS YEAR.
■ AVERAGE HIGH SCHOOL GPA IS 3.07
■ 87% IN-STATE
■ 11% MINORITY—8.7% AFRICAN-AMERICAN AND 2.3% INTERNATIONAL
■ BY 2003, WE WANT TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF APPLICANTS BY 3,000.
RAISE THE ACT AVERAGE TO 22.5. REACH AN IN-STATE/OUT-OF-STATE
MIX OF 80-20 AND RAISE THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN POPULATION TO 10%
■ BUT WHAT DO WE OFFER AS AN INSTITUTION TO ACHIEVE THESE GOALS?
  • SMALL CLASS SIZE
  • HIGH PERCENTAGE OF FULL-TIME FACULTY WHO TEACH
  • CONCERNED AND DEDICATED FACULTY AND STAFF
  • A COMMITMENT TO GRADUATE THOSE WHO ENROLL AND THE
    RETENTION PROGRAMS TO DELIVER ON THAT COMMITMENT
SUCCESSFUL ALUMNI

A COHESIVE FAMILY ATMOSPHERE

A CAMPUS RICH IN CHARACTER AND TRADITION. FROM ITS UNIQUE LANDSCAPE TO ITS HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT ARCHITECTURE TO THE CHARACTERS WHO BUILT OUR SPECIAL TRADITIONS AND VALUES

STATE-OF-THE-ART TECHNOLOGY IN OUR ACADEMIC BUILDINGS, RESIDENCE HALLS AND FITNESS CENTER

A GROWING BOWLING GREEN COMMUNITY EASILY ACCESSED AND ONLY 60 MILES FROM NASHVILLE

MOST IMPORTANTLY--WE OFFER IN A WESTERN EDUCATION, A PROMISE OF SATISFACTION WITH THE EDUCATION AND STUDENT LIFE EXPERIENCE MARKETABILITY IN ONE’S CHOSEN FIELD, AND VALUE FOR COST.

ONE OF THE STRENGTHS OF WESTERN IS OUR CAPACITY TO BE AGGRESSIVE IN RECRUITING GOOD STUDENTS WHILE COMPLETELY FULFILLING OUR RESPONSIBILITIES FOR ACCESSIBILITY WESTERN WILL STRATEGICALLY BUILD EACH FRESHMAN CLASS ON THE MAIN CAMPUS--THIS YEAR’S FRESHMAN CLASS IS UP BY ABOUT 100 STUDENTS AND TOTAL ENROLLMENT IS UP BY SOME 200 STUDENTS. WE WILL ALSO COORDINATE OUR ADMISSIONS PROGRAM TO OPTIMIZE OUR COMMUNITY COLLEGE IN BOWLING GREEN STUDENTS WHO PURSUE AN ASSOCIATE’S DEGREE OR NEED REMEDIATION CAN ENROLL IN THE
COMMUNITY COLLEGE AND TRANSFER ON TO THE MAIN CAMPUS AFTER A SEMESTER OR A YEAR OR THE COMPLETION OF A TWO-YEAR DEGREE—ALL THE WHILE STILL BEING AN IMPORTANT MEMBER OF THE WESTERN FAMILY

WESTERN IS ALSO PLAYING A LEAD ROLE IN THE EMERGING COMMONWEALTH VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY ALL OF THE STATE UNIVERSITIES WILL PROVIDE ELECTRONIC COURSES IN A SYNCHRONIZED PORTFOLIO OF COURSE WORK AND DEGREE PROGRAMS. IN ADDITION, WESTERN OFFERS ITS OWN UNIQUE DISTANCE LEARNING COURSES AND DEGREE PROGRAMS—SOME FROM THE MAIN CAMPUS AND SOME FROM OUR CAMPUS IN GLASGOW, ELIZABETHTOWN, FT. KNOX, AND OWENSBORO, EACH OF WHICH OFFERS A WIDE RANGE OF ON-SITE COURSES AND DEGREES FOR COMMUTING STUDENTS OF ALL AGES WHO LIVE CLOSE TO THOSE CITIES.

EACH YEAR WESTERN PARTICIPATES IN TWO ACCOUNTABILITY SURVEYS COORDINATED BY THE COUNCIL ON POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION. THESE SURVEYS TARGET RECENT GRADUATES AND SENIORS.

1998 RESULTS FROM RECENT BACHELOR'S DEGREE GRADUATES SHOW WESTERN TO HAVE A 94% RATING IN ALUMNI RESPONSES OF "GOOD" OR "EXCELLENT" IN OVERALL INSTRUCTION. THIS WAS THE HIGHEST SCORE AMONG ALL EIGHT UNIVERSITIES IN KENTUCKY. INSTRUCTION IN ONE'S MAJOR HAD A 93% SCORE FOR WESTERN—94% WAS THE HIGHEST IN KENTUCKY.

IN THE SURVEY OF SENIORS, WESTERN STUDENTS GAVE A RATING OF 89% IN OVERALL INSTRUCTION COMPARED TO THE HIGHEST IN STATE RATING OF
91%. The lowest rating was 72%. The WKU seniors produced the highest state rating—91%—for the quality of instruction in one's major. The low was 79%.

My point is that our commitment to the students we serve are not idle objectives—they are absolute intentions which guide decisions and actions and are measurable and documented on an annual basis.

The Western faculty and staff have been hard at work over the last ten months creating a five-year plan called *Challenging the Spirit*. The plan is a precise road map with absolute and measurable outcomes which we intend to achieve by 2003. The plan draws on the directions outlined in recent legislation in Frankfort which states priorities for Kentucky colleges and universities.

Priorities for teaching and research, for programs of distinction on our campuses, for maintaining our campuses, for improved quality, and for enhanced accessibility House Bill 1 could not be more timely for higher education and for Western. Higher education is a priority for Governor Patton and for the General Assembly. The state has recognized the strong linkage between an educated population, the development of a workforce, and economic prosperity in the Commonwealth.

The second major factor which shaped Western's plan is an
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW COMMISSIONED BY OUR BOARD OF REGENTS LAST FALL. A TEAM OF INDEPENDENT UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS SPENT SEVERAL DAYS ON THE CAMPUS AND STUDIED WESTERN CURRICULUM, DATA, SYSTEMS, EXPENDITURES, ALL OF ITS STRENGTHS AND ITS WEAKNESSES—EVERYTHING POSSIBLE. THE REVIEW TEAM SUBMITTED A VERY CANDID AND OBJECTIVE REPORT WITH STRONG RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE. IT TOOK A CONSTRUCTIVELY CRITICAL VIEW OF MANY OF WESTERN'S PROCEDURES AND HABITS AND OUTLINED LOGICAL ACTIONS TO IMPROVE AND STRENGTHEN THE UNIVERSITY--TOP TO BOTTOM.

THE RESULT OF THESE TWO ACTIONS BY THE STATE AND BY THE WESTERN BOARD LED TO OUR STRATEGIC PLAN—CHALLENGING THE SPIRIT. SINCE MY APPOINTMENT ON SEPTEMBER 12 AND MY FIRST DAY ON NOVEMBER 1, I HAVE BEEN CONSUMED WITH IDENTIFYING THOSE THINGS WHICH DEFINE OUR CHARACTER AND MAKE WESTERN DISTINCTIVE AND FINDING WAYS TO NOURISH THEM, AND I'VE BEEN CONSUMED WITH BRINGING ABOUT THE CHANGES OUTLINED IN THE INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW AND SOME THINGS I'VE DISCOVERED ON MY OWN SINCE MY RETURN TO THE "HILL." WE ARE CHANGING SOME HABITS—EVEN SOME TRADITIONS WHICH MAY HAVE BEEN HOLDING US BACK IN RECENT YEARS. WE'VE CHANGED OUR BUDGET PHILOSOPHY WE HAVE EMPOWERED OUR FACULTY AND STAFF TO USE AND CARRY OVER BUDGET BALANCES FROM ONE YEAR TO THE NEXT. WE'VE ADOPTED A SERVICE CULTURE, WE'VE OPENED THE CAMPUS MORE TO THE
COMMUNITY AND REGION, BUT WE’VE REFRAINED FROM USING THAT WORD “REGIONAL.”

THE NEW STRATEGIC PLAN HAS A CLEAR VISION. WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY ASPIRES TO BE THE BEST COMPREHENSIVE PUBLIC INSTITUTION IN KENTUCKY AND AMONG THE BEST IN THE NATION/STRAIGHTFORWARD, SIMPLE/NOTHING REGIONAL ABOUT IT. NATIONAL IN SCOPE AND AMBITION. WE’RE NOT THE LAND GRANT, GRADUATE RESEARCH UNIVERSITY IN KENTUCKY WE’RE NOT THE URBAN RESEARCH INSTITUTION. WE ARE A COMPREHENSIVE UNIVERSITY FOCUSED ON UNDERGRADUATE INSTRUCTION AND COMPLEMENTED BY RELEVANT MASTER’S AND A LIMITED NUMBER OF JOINT DOCTORAL PROGRAMS WITH UK AND U OF L.

OUR MISSION IS EQUALLY SIMPLE. WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY SHALL PRODUCE GLOBALLY COMPETITIVE GRADUATES AND PROVIDE OPTIMUM SERVICE AND LIFE-LONG LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES TO ITS CONSTITUENTS. THAT’S OUR MISSION.

THE CHALLENGING THE SPIRIT PLAN IS DESIGNED TO ALLOW WESTERN TO ACHIEVE A NATIONALLY PROMINENT POSITION, TO BE THE UNIVERSITY OF CHOICE FOR FACULTY AND STUDENTS DEDICATED TO ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE. THE PLAN HAS FIVE STRATEGIC GOALS RELATING TO INCREASED STUDENT LEARNING, DEVELOPING THE STUDENT BODY, ASSURING HIGH QUALITY FACULTY AND STAFF, ENHANCING RESPONSIVENESS TO CONSTITUENTS, AND IMPROVING INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS. THERE ARE 27 THOROUGHLY
RESEARCHED OBJECTIVES SPREAD THROUGH THESE FIVE GOALS AND ABSOLUTE OUTCOMES WHICH WE ARE PUBLICLY ON RECORD TO ACHIEVE BY JUNE 30, 2003. THEY RANGE FROM ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE TO QUALITY OF INCOMING STUDENTS, TO RETENTION OF STUDENTS, TO FACULTY COMPENSATION, TO INVESTMENTS IN PHYSICAL PLANT, TO NEW LEVELS OF SPONSORED RESEARCH, TO ALUMNI FINANCIAL SUPPORT, TO THE SIZE OF OUR ENDOWMENT, TO THE CONVERSION OF ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEMS. THIS PLAN CALLS FOR AN INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION--A TRANSFORMATION WHICH WILL REQUIRE THE BEST EFFORTS OF EVERYONE IN THE WESTERN FAMILY AND ALL WHO ARE INTERESTED IN WESTERN.

ONE OF THE WAYS WE INTEND TO MEASURE OUR PROGRESS IS TO COMPARE OUR PERFORMANCE AGAINST A GROUP OF INSTITUTIONS WHICH PERFORM WELL IN VARIOUS AREAS WHERE WE NEED TO IMPROVE. LAST SPRING, HUNDREDS OF FACULTY, STUDENTS, AND ALUMNI PARTICIPATED IN AN EXERCISE TO IDENTIFY A GROUP OF PEER INSTITUTIONS WITH WHICH WE COULD DRAW SUCH COMPARISONS. PARRING DOWN A GROUP OF 36 UNIVERSITIES, SUGGESTED BY THE CPE AND OUR OWN FACULTY, THE WESTERN FAMILY HAS SETTLED ON A GROUP OF TEN. THEY ARE, IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER: APPALACHIAN STATE UNIVERSITY IN NORTH CAROLINA, BALL STATE UNIVERSITY IN INDIANA, EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY IN NORTH CAROLINA, INDIANA STATE UNIVERSITY, JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY IN VIRGINIA, MARSHALL UNIVERSITY IN WEST VIRGINIA, MIAMI UNIVERSITY IN OHIO,
MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY, SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY, TRUMAN STATE UNIVERSITY IN MISSOURI, AND WESTERN FOR A PEER GROUP OF 11 UNIVERSITIES.

WE WILL MEASURE NEARLY EVERYTHING WE DO IN AN EFFORT TO MOVE TO THE UPPER LEVEL OF THIS GROUP—ACCEPTANCE RATES, ADMISSION STANDARDS, ACT SCORES, FACULTY-STUDENT RATIO, COMPENSATION PATTERNS, GRADUATION RATES, RETENTION RATES, ALUMNI GIVING, UTILITY EFFICIENCY, PARKING PLACES PER STUDENT/PER FACULTY/PER STAFF, GENDER, RACIAL, ETHNIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC COMPOSITION OF THE STUDENT BODY. THE LIST IS LIMITLESS.

LET ME GIVE YOU SOME EXAMPLES OF HOW WESTERN CURRENTLY COMPARES TO THIS PEER GROUP. A GOOD COMPARISON IS FACULTY STUDENT RATIOS. WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY HAS THE LOWEST FACULTY-STUDENT RATIO AMONG THE GROUP NOW AT 16-1. MARSHALL UNIVERSITY HAS THE HIGHEST AT 20-1. WE HAVE 46 UNDERGRADUATE CLASSES WITH 19 OR FEWER STUDENTS. THAT TIES EAST CAROLINA FOR THE MOST SUCH CLASSES.

MIAMI UNIVERSITY IN OHIO HAS ONLY 26 UNDERGRADUATE CLASSES WITH FEWER THAN 19 STUDENTS. WE ARE IN THE MIDDLE OF THIS PEER IN TERMS OF FRESHMEN IN THE TOP 25% OF THEIR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATING CLASS. 26% OF WESTERN'S FRESHMEN WERE IN THE TOP 25% OF THE HIGH SCHOOL CLASS WHEREAS THE RANGE OF THIS GROUP WAS 76% AT TRUMAN STATE AND ONLY 31% AT BALL STATE. A CATEGORY WHERE WE HAVE TO IMPROVE.
Dramatically is graduation rates. James Madison University and Miami University graduate 82% of their students in six years or less. Western is only graduating 42%. While that is second only to UK's 48% in Kentucky, it is close to the bottom of our peer group which has MTSU at 38%.

Earlier I mentioned value for cost as a priority for Western.

When we compare our costs to this peer group, we get a mixed perspective. Our resident tuition and fees ranks 9th of the group of 11 at $2,140 we exceed only the two North Carolina universities--Appalachian State University and East Carolina. The high is Miami of Ohio at $5,406. We are some $600 below the average. We are #11, the lowest in nonresident tuition and fees at $5,740 with the average being over $8,000. Our room and board, at $3,517, is 9th in the group. Only Appalachian State and MTSU are lower while James Madison is the highest at $4,846. These comparisons clearly show the value for cost in a Western education. It also shows how difficult it may be to catch some of these universities when they are operating with considerably larger tuition revenue flow.

All this is to say we know where we want to go. We've charted the course to get there. We're measuring our progress each step of the way, and we intend to achieve our objectives in a reasonable period of time. My message to you in Russellville is to assure that
WE WANT AS MANY OF YOUR STUDENTS AS POSSIBLE TO HELP LEAD THE WAY!

THANK YOU FOR HAVING ME. I’M LOOKING FORWARD TO SPENDING THE AFTERNOON WITH YOUR COMMUNITY LEADERS AND WITH OUR ALUMNI THIS EVENING. COME TO CAMPUS OFTEN. SUPPORT THE HILTOPPERS. BY THE WAY, WE’RE ADOPTING A WHOLE NEW APPROACH TO TAILGATING THIS FALL. HERE ARE SOME BROCHURES WHICH WILL FACILITATE OUR HOSPITALITY AND YOUR ENJOYMENT. WE WANT YOU AND STUDENTS AT WESTERN. IT’S YOUR CAMPUS. SO COME BE A PART OF COLLEGE LIFE AT ITS BEST! THANK YOU.