

Cardiologist Reveals How Heart Disease Can Be REVERSED

Denzel Washington Confirms the Rumors

Top Gut Doctor: I Beg All Americans To Throw Out This Vegetable

Seniors with No Life Insurance Are in for a Big Surprise

Better Than The Blue Pill for Men 45+

Men Don't Need Viagra If You Do This Once Daily

Why Christians Get Sick

Do you support building the border wall?

Powered by **FEEDNETWORK**



Home / News

https://www.bgdailynews.com/news/wku-makes-progress-on-retaining-students/article_09d85f60-4bc4-586d-99f8-3ba8531957de.html

WKU makes progress on retaining students

AARON MUDD amudd@bgdailynews.com 27 min ago



Timothy Caboni

When the spring semester began at Western Kentucky University this week, more first-year students returned to the Hill for their second semester than in 2017.

That was the message of WKU President Timothy Caboni, who announced the news in an email Tuesday to faculty and staff as a sign of the university's progress on retaining more of its student body.

Facing years of enrollment decline and a dwindling number of high school graduates to recruit, the university has put more resources into retaining the students it has.

"Our first to second semester persistence rate for the fall 2018 first-time, first-year student cohort is up 4 percent to 86.5 percent from 82.5 percent when compared with 2017," Caboni wrote in the message.

Caboni added that, when it comes to low-income, first-generation, underrepresented minority students, the university saw "even larger gains" in this academic year's first-time, first-year class.

"This builds on the first to second year persistence gains we realized this past fall," he wrote.

While clarifying that the numbers are preliminary and subject to change, Caboni wrote that "they indicate we are heading in the right direction as an institution."

Caboni credited the hard work of faculty and staff and new retention efforts, such as the Kelly M. Burch Institute and the Intercultural Student Engagement Center, which were “designed to help students make progress to graduation through a combination of support, engagement and mentorship,” he wrote.

“These results are due to the work of our entire community,” Caboni wrote. “We have much more to do, but this is terrific progress. You should be proud of the positive results we are creating for students and WKU.”

At the start of the fall semester, Caboni said in an interview with the Daily News that retention is a top priority. His remarks in August followed a year of tough choices. WKU cut almost 150 positions during multiple rounds of staffing cuts last spring and its Board of Regents in June approved a budget nearly \$30 million in spending cuts.

“We have some stability now,” he told the Daily News. “By next fall, we must do better with retention. Our first- to second-year students have to persist at a higher rate. We have to recruit more aggressively. And we have to think about how we make sure we leverage our financial aid to have as many students in that first-year class, who are not just going to be in that first-year class, but are going to graduate here.”

Reacting to Caboni’s campuswide message Wednesday, WKU mathematics professor Claus Ernst called it “a very positive sign.” Ernst serves on WKU’s Board of Regents as faculty regent.

“I like the message. I think it’s encouraging,” he said.

Ernst noted that, with state spending on higher education in decline, WKU has become increasingly dependent on tuition dollars. In fact, according to the university’s 2018-19 budget, tuition and fees make up 50.9 percent of projected revenue this fiscal year.

By comparison, state appropriations make up just 19.2 percent of revenue.

Ernst also added that, because WKU is rewarded for outcomes like graduation rate under the state's new performance funding model, an increase in retention could be a promising sign of good things to come.

“I think it's a good first step,” he said.

– Follow education reporter Aaron Mudd on Twitter @BGDN_edbeat or visit bgdailynews.com.

Aaron Mudd

Education reporter. Covers education and related issues, focusing primarily on the Bowling Green and Warren County public school districts and Western Kentucky University.