

# Western Kentucky University Receives Gift For History Professorship; \$90 Million Campaign Goal Achieved

April 25, 2003



*Bowling Green, Ky.* - A \$1 million gift commitment from a Las Vegas, Nev., alumnus will fund one of the most important priorities of Western Kentucky University's "Investing in the Spirit Campaign."

Tom Hiles, WKU's vice president for Institutional Advancement, announced today that Dick Frockt; his wife, Janet; and his son, Ryan, who is a student at Western; have made a gift to create the "Richard Frockt Family Professorship in History" in the Potter College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. The \$500,000 gift will be matched by the Commonwealth of Kentucky's Regional Excellence Trust Fund, and will put the Campaign total above the new goal of \$90 million, established in May 2002.

"We are so grateful for this new commitment," Hiles said. "This gift solidifies the 23rd endowed professorship created since the beginning of the Campaign in 1998. The Campaign has a goal of establishing 25 such professorships, as support for nationally-prominent faculty is essential in preparing competent graduates and future leaders in Kentucky and the nation."

Dr. David Lee, dean of the Potter College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, expressed his appreciation to the Frockts. "This generous gift represents a strong commitment to academic priorities of Western and to the general education curriculum which is pursued by all students at Western," he said.

Frockt credits Western with much of the success he has achieved during his career. In 1963, he had been out of college for a year, and thought it was time to get back to his education. He had experienced significant problems during his freshman year at another university, but his father was very supportive of his desire to continue his education.

"My father at that time was in the insurance business with a gentleman named Harry Davis who had previously been the chief of staff for Happy Chandler when he was governor," Frockt said. "During that tenure he had become friends with Kelly Thompson, who was then president of Western Kentucky University."

An appointment was arranged and Dick Frockt and his dad drove to Bowling Green to meet personally with Dr. Thompson.

Frockt recalls: "After the pleasantries of the meeting with Dr. Thompson, I remember him looking at me and asking if I wanted to return to college and would I commit to him to make every effort to

succeed. He explained that he did not want to commit Western's resources if I was unwilling to commit myself. After a few moments, I told him that I would."

After a brief meeting alone with Frockt's father, Dr. Thompson explained to Dick that that his admission would come with a few strings attached. Dr. Thompson introduced Dick to Dero Downing, who at that time was Western's dean of students.

"They explained that my admission was conditioned on the following: that I would commit myself to succeeding; that Dr. Downing would weekly discuss my progress with my professors; and that every Saturday morning I would come to Dr. Thompson's office where we would discuss my progress or problems.

"Dr. Thompson, as it turned out, became my mentor," Frockt continued. "The first full semester he spent his personal time going over my weekly results, both good and bad, and offering his advice on my direction."

Frockt graduated in 1967, an accomplishment he credits directly to Dr. Thompson.

"He guided me and by gentle persuasion helped me to succeed," Frockt said. "I could look to him for guidance and help, which gave me the confidence to succeed.

"I have chosen to make this gift to Western to both show my appreciation for what the University has done for me and to help future students find success as well."

WKU President Gary Ransdell says the Frockt story is an inspirational one. "We are pleased that members of the Western family helped prepare Dick for his success, and we are grateful that he and his wife have chosen to give back to the University in such a generous way. The addition of the "Frockt Family Professorship in History" will touch countless students like Dick for many years to come."

Hiles added that it is truly fitting that this gift was the one that brought the Campaign over the top of its new \$90 million goal.

"First and foremost, obtaining increased support for our faculty and students, while honoring the traditions and contributions of our valued alumni and friends, was the most important goal within the Campaign," he said. "Endowed professorships will have an outstanding legacy of importance for Western. In addition, history is a discipline that touches the lives of every student who walks the Hill at Western Kentucky University."

Hiles said that Western will continue to seek gifts for the Campaign through June 30, 2003. "Achieving our \$90 million goal is representative of what is possible at Western," he said. "Dr. Ransdell has instilled an entrepreneurial spirit, and we are finding creative ways to solve complex problems. We will continue to seek gifts in support of each of these important priorities."

With the Frockt gift, the Campaign total now stands at \$90.2 million.

For more information, contact Tom Hiles at (270) 745-6208. More WKU news is available on the World Wide Web at [www.wku.edu](http://www.wku.edu). If you'd like to receive WKU news via e-mail, send a message to [WKUNews@wku.edu](mailto:WKUNews@wku.edu).