



Climbing to
Greater Heights

The WKU Strategic Plan 2018 - 2028

WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

Message from the Strategic Planning Committee Co-Chairs

In the fall of 2017 we were honored to be asked by President Timothy Caboni to serve as co-chairs for the 2018-2028 WKU Strategic Plan. President Caboni identified six working group committees and a steering committee and asked this group to create a document that “will capture our shared aspirations for the university and how we will make those a reality.” This transformative journey began with a mix of anticipation and excitement as we embraced an aggressive timeline in order to deliver the completed plan by August 2018.

Over the next several months, members of the WKU community offered their input, ideas, and dreams to create the fabric of the WKU Strategic Plan that is intended to lead the direction of the University over the next decade. The process kicked off on October 9, 2017, with a planning session in which President Caboni introduced the process and key steps and laid out the charge. Over the next month, the separate committees met to discuss strengths, problems, and visions for the future. The first open forum was held in November with the primary goal of obtaining input from the broader WKU community, and throughout the fall, campus and community input was received through our Strategic Plan webpage. The final meetings of the fall term were held in December with a gathering of all committees followed by a second campus open forum.

Once the bulk of the work by the individual committees had been accomplished, the co-chairs and co-advisors met to review commonalities of direction across the committees. Each committee created a white paper that detailed their major goals, objectives, and strategies. An independent student group also collected data and provided their input. The co-advisors met with the WKU Senate and SGA leadership to obtain input as well. More public forums in February gathered further feedback, and a draft plan was presented in a public forum in May. After final review and approval by President Caboni and his Cabinet, the Board of Regents approved the 2018-2028 WKU Strategic Plan on August 3, 2018. President Caboni unveiled the plan at the August 2018 Convocation.

With the advent of a new era at WKU, the creation of a ten-year strategic plan that involved the greater WKU community is an important step in guiding our future. This living document is possible only as the result of the thousands of hours contributed by dedicated and caring individuals who are truly devoted to WKU students and everyone impacted by our Hill. To all who participated in this extremely important process, we offer our heartfelt and profound appreciation. It is our hope that this Strategic Plan guides WKU to its most successful years yet for the benefit of all those who choose to Climb With Us.



Bruce A. Schulte, PhD
Department Head of Biology



Paula Potter, PhD
Department Head of Management

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*Dedicated
to scholarly excellence*

Our Students. Our Hill. Our Community and Beyond.

Initially established in downtown Bowling Green, Western Kentucky University relocated to its hilltop campus on February 4, 1911, when students and faculty literally picked up the furniture and equipment they could carry and marched up the hill to their new home in Van Meter Hall. This began the climb that has defined the WKU Experience for our students for more than 100 years. While the campus structures and leadership have changed over time, President Henry Hardin Cherry's commitment to transforming the lives of students and serving our region and the commonwealth remains constant. Our Hill is omnipresent and steadfast — and our continual climb is both real and symbolic.

Climbing to Greater Heights: The 2018-2028 Strategic Plan for Western Kentucky University is a carefully defined roadmap that will guide the University through the next decade. It focuses on student success and ensuring that our campus environment attracts the highest quality faculty and staff, and it renews our commitment to being fully engaged in our region and the commonwealth while providing a global context to the WKU Experience.

The landscape for public higher education is ever changing and may at times feel like an uphill climb. We will prepare ourselves to meet the challenges that lie ahead by pursuing innovation in teaching and delivery, connecting what we do to the region and the commonwealth, and ensuring that the WKU Experience transforms the lives of our students, employees, alumni, and friends and elevates the communities we serve - both in our region and beyond. These are the principles that will guide us in our climb to greater heights. We invite you to **climb with us.**

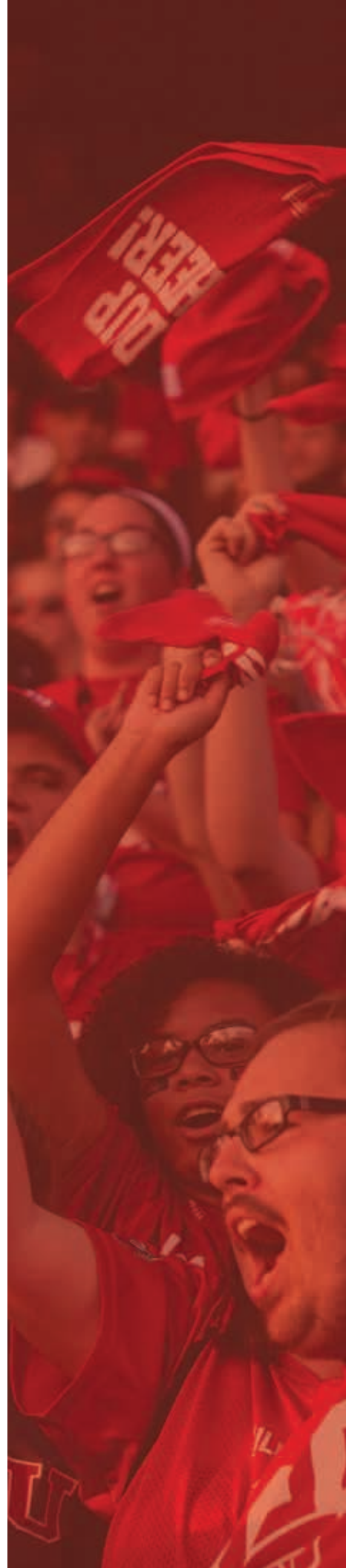
We embrace our responsibility as a public university in Kentucky to provide access to an affordable postsecondary education of exceptional quality, but we also recognize that access without success is access to nothing at all. This plan outlines aggressive steps to ensure that students can graduate in four years fully prepared to enter the workplace or pursue a graduate degree. WKU students will begin their climb confident they have support from faculty, staff, and the community. And when our graduates leave WKU, they will depart with the skills to make a good living and, more importantly, with the capacity to make a good life for themselves and for those around them.

WKU students will lead healthy, productive lives, make informed decisions using critical thinking skills, and exhibit respect and responsibility toward others and the environment. We will recruit college-ready students, retain them at higher rates, and provide them with a dynamic and challenging educational environment that facilitates their growth as scholars and individuals. WKU students will graduate work-ready and fully prepared to pursue meaningful careers and lives.

WKU already engages with many K-12 students. However, we should assist in the career and life development of every student in our service region and promote a culture of education beyond high school. While much of this engagement should promote WKU, some participants will find a college or career fit elsewhere. But many will become Hilltoppers.

After admission, we will work with each student to create an individualized Personal and Professional Development Plan that will lead toward selection of a career pathway. These plans are an important component of the WKU Experience and will follow a student through their undergraduate career, as upperclassmen, graduate students, and ultimately as alumni.

We will centralize and transform advising, focusing heavily on the first two years of enrollment. This reimagined Comprehensive Advising Program comprises more than just a discussion of schedules and careers but also will incorporate financial, mental, physical, and social wellness. When appropriate (and by the junior year), generalist central advisors will transition their advisees to a specialized advisor with training and expertise in the offerings of a particular college, its academic programs, faculty, and related career paths. Faculty also will retain their important roles providing counsel and advice to students. Finally, a cohort of peer mentors will support students as they persist and progress toward graduation.





OUR
Students

In our effort to significantly increase first to second year retention, we will focus our attention and central resources on a robust and engaging First Year Experience. Each WKU freshman will have the opportunity to reside in Living Learning Communities in the proposed First Year Village.

Every WKU student will participate in shared intellectual experiences in and out of the classroom and will have access to high-impact practices such as internships, study-abroad, service learning, and undergraduate research throughout their college career. Additionally, all students will benefit from dining, studying, interacting, and investigating in the multi-purpose WKU Commons, which will be located in the WKU Libraries.

We will build upon the five-year Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan, which along with the Colonnade Program at WKU plays a substantial role in the lives of our students and leads to institutional diversity, cultural competency, and global citizenry for all. International and experiential education will continue to be core to the WKU Experience, and we will enhance educational opportunities on and away from campus to expand student horizons and cultural awareness.

As an institution of access and opportunity, we must ensure every interested student who aspires to be a Hilltopper has the ability to attend WKU and participate fully in the WKU Experience. We will do this by incorporating student need as well as academic merit in our financial aid decisions and by generating private financial support for the WKU Opportunity Fund, a \$50 million fund dedicated to providing a wide array of experiences and opportunities for our students regardless of their economic background.

Increased partnerships with employers to provide co-op education opportunities, job-shadowing, and internship experiences, as well as placement of graduates, will be critical to our ability to produce a fully prepared workforce and to meet the needs of business and industry in our region and beyond.



Affordability & Accessibility

Ensure the WKU Experience remains affordable and accessible to every qualified student:

- Incorporate student need and other factors into financial aid decision-making, and shift to a net tuition revenue posture.
- Create the WKU Opportunity Fund through private philanthropy and giving.



A Diverse Body of Students

Enroll a diverse body of regional and global undergraduate, graduate, and nontraditional students who are fully prepared for a rigorous, fulfilling college experience at WKU:

- Work with regional K-12 and Community College educational systems to provide educational opportunities through outreach; recruit undergraduate students who are college-ready and who want to be members of the WKU family; and prepare Personal and Professional Development Plans for each WKU student.
- Establish regional, national, and international conduits for attracting undergraduate and graduate students.
- Ensure access to WKU for under-represented student populations through a targeted attraction and recruitment plan.
- Set honest and realistic costs of college on which entrants can rely when planning their WKU career.
- Engage deans and department chairs in a comprehensive academic program review to ensure WKU has an appropriate mix of study options and efficiently deploys scarce resources.

Devoted to diversity, equity, and inclusion for all



Completion & Success

Ensure WKU student completion and success:

- Create a Comprehensive Advising Program (CAP) involving generalist and specialist advisors, trained faculty, and other support staff to assist each student with creation of an individualized Personal and Professional Development Plan that will serve as a guide for the pursuit and completion of a four-year degree that leads to a successful career or entrance into graduate school.
- Develop a peer mentoring system.



Preparation for the Global Stage

Prepare students for career and life in a global context:

- Through the Colonnade Program, a student's degree program, and the Personal and Professional Development Plan, provide common intellectual experiences and high-impact practices to develop hard and soft skills as well as to cultivate good, productive citizens.
- Create and maintain the physical and virtual structures that contribute to completion and success for all WKU students.



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Enact and practice all aspects of WKU's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion plan:

- Institute the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan for years 1-5 of the strategic plan; review, assess, reconfigure as needed and re-institute for years 6-10 of the strategic plan.
- Work with the associate provost for global learning and with faculty and staff to continue to expand off-campus and on-campus educational opportunities.



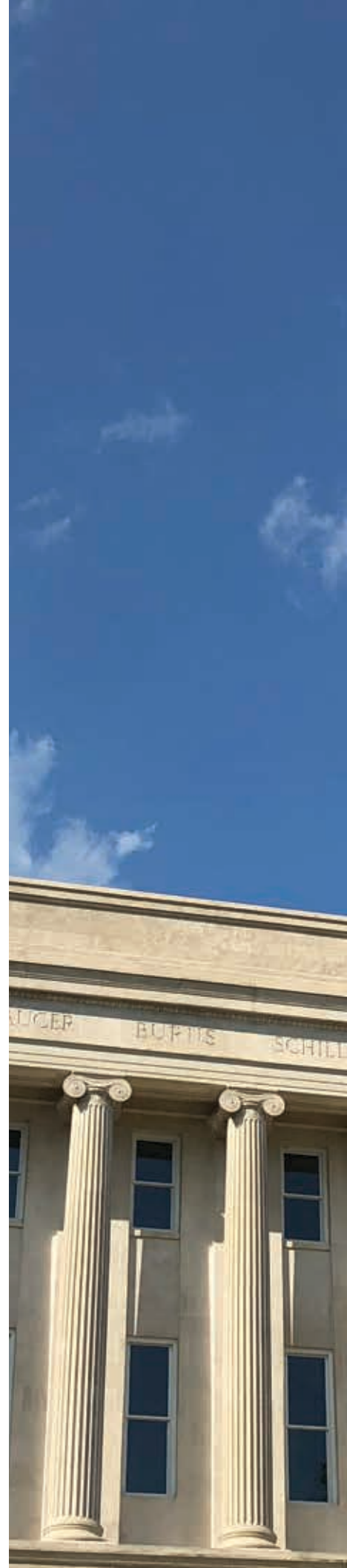
The Hill is both the physical location and symbolic representation of the people that are the lifeblood of the University. Throughout its rich history, WKU has been shaped by its leadership and the dedicated faculty and staff who have committed their life's work to teaching, research, and service that transforms the lives of our students and elevates the communities around us. This plan advances a campus climate that supports quality teaching and pursuits of scholarly and creative activities; service and outreach; a devotion to diversity, equity, and inclusion; and a commitment to being responsible citizens and good stewards of place.

A stable, realistic, transparent fiscal plan for WKU serves as the foundation of our efforts to reward, develop, and retain talent; to create innovative academic programs; to continually improve and elevate instruction; to encourage service and outreach; and to support and facilitate research and inquiry. In the first year of this plan, WKU will implement a new decentralized budget model that is designed to be nimble and that will invest in strategic priorities, reward performance, empower deans, and enhance academic entrepreneurship.

To ensure consistency and equity across the institution, WKU will implement a new system of performance evaluation that will appropriately determine and adjust compensation packages for new and continuing employees and fairly allocate merit increases. Additionally, job descriptions will be reviewed and revised to create greater uniformity across similar positions university-wide.

The WKU Experience puts high quality teaching and innovative academic programs at its core. We will engage in a process of program review to ensure we have the most attractive, efficient, and appropriate mix of program offerings. WKU will create the necessary physical and virtual structures to support innovative pedagogy and instruction and will offer professional development and pedagogical training to enact and nurture these programs.

We embrace and will invest in the use of technology, high impact practices, process learning, cultural immersion, team-planning of classes and co-instruction that creates opportunities for more effective teaching and service that elevates quality and more fully engages students. The University will support faculty and staff in the intentional and continual learning that is critical to student-centered, inspirational, and constructive instruction.



OUR
Hill

WESTERN
KENTUCKY
UNIVERSITY

*The Spirit
Makes
The Master*

OUR *Hill*

In addition to student-centered instruction, another hallmark of the WKU Experience is the active inclusion of students in faculty research and creative activities, and the intentional cultivation of individual student research projects. WKU will continue to grow and support faculty and student research, especially inquiry that has the potential to attract funding and financial support. We will elevate and articulate ever more clearly our institutional niche as an applied research university, putting ideas into action and demonstrating the link between theory and practice. Growing WKU's portfolio of sponsored research will increase faculty scholarship, enhance WKU's reputation, and create useable knowledge for our world.

Great teaching, scholarship, and service require dedicated, healthy employees and a collegial working environment. WKU policies and programs will support the health and well-being of each member of the University community and will foster a climate of support, respect, and appreciation for one another and for the institutional history and traditions.

*Innovative in
teaching and learning*



Policies & Practices

Establish policies and practices that promote a collegial work environment, overall employee wellness, stewardship of place, and an appreciation for WKU's history and traditions:

- Conduct a comprehensive market analysis of employee salaries and benefits, and implement necessary changes to merit increases, personnel training, and support infrastructure.
- Provide employee services for financial and life planning, mental and physical fitness, and professional development.
- Adopt measures that promote sustainable practices and efficient use of campus resources.
- Embrace and promote the rich history, symbols, and traditions that have served as the foundation of the University since its establishment in 1906 among students, faculty, staff, alumni, and the community.

\$ Sustainable Budget Model

Implement a budget model that is sustainable, supports institutional priorities that ensure student success, and rewards strategic performance across the enterprise:

- Base resource allocation decisions on actual results, implementing a performance-based financial model through the RAMP initiative.
- Create compensation packages and institute a reward system based on equity, responsibilities, longevity, and strategic performance.
- Design and implement a consistent, university-wide performance evaluation system to conduct annual reviews.
- Review and establish greater standardization in position descriptions for all employees.



A Culture of Innovation

Increase faculty participation in programs offered through the Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning to build a culture of innovation through the use of current and emerging instructional technologies, and create specific programming to enhance teaching and active learning:

- Support and enhance the Colonnade Program, working to tailor enrollments to students' Personal and Professional Development Plans.
- Review current teaching methodologies, integrate appropriate best practices, support the requisite physical structures and technologies, provide ongoing training for faculty in pedagogy, and include evaluation of instruction in tenure and promotion reviews.
- Facilitate high impact practices, immersive learning in different cultures, process-learning practices, and collaborative learning and instructional opportunities.
- Schedule course offerings to maximize student progression and completion.



Research & Creative Activities

Incentivize and support research and creative activities that promote student learning, expand university outreach and service, and bolster the regional economy:

- Create an Office of Undergraduate Research.
- Bolster the stature and fiscal support of WKU's Graduate School, and strengthen its external reputation.
- Include scholarly activities coupled with student mentorship in hiring, annual review, the tenure and promotion process, merit pay allocations, and faculty workload decisions.
- Increase fiscal resources, expand physical space, and enhance virtual support for student and faculty scholarly activities.



OUR *Community and Beyond*

Henry Hardin Cherry's decision to locate WKU high on a hilltop in beautiful Bowling Green, Kentucky, was intentional. Overlooking the city from the Hill was symbolic of President Cherry's commitment to caring for the community by educating its citizens. Today, WKU is an economic engine for the region and the commonwealth, and our reach extends across the globe through our faculty, staff, students, and alumni. This plan recognizes the need for WKU to be intentional in our partnerships with the communities that surround us, to be actively engaged in elevating the economies in those communities, and to build the talent pipeline that will fuel the future workforce for the commonwealth. As important is our commitment to providing a global context to the WKU Experience both on the Hill and throughout the world.

As the commonwealth's premier student-centered, applied research university, WKU's energy and resources must be focused first on meeting the obligations to the region we were built to serve. WKU will engage actively and take a leadership role in conversations regarding economic, environmental, and cultural development within our service region. University faculty, staff, and students will influence these conversations through scholarly activities, outreach, service, and applied research. Along with regional partners, WKU will lead efforts to develop and grow the communities we serve using data, research, and forward-thinking policies; and through partnerships with K-12 education, business, industry, and government leaders, we will work together to provide a talent pipeline for the future.

From our Hill in Kentucky, our reach will be international in scope, ensuring that our students and the region are fully prepared and able to compete in a global market. Committed to creating an environment where individuals from around the world will come to study, we also will continue to cultivate an environment that attracts individuals from every part of the globe to study and teach at WKU.

Through the WKU Innovation Campus, we will create an environment that attracts investment, creates partnerships, cultivates new ideas, and incubates nascent businesses.

As part of WKU's commitment to creating a well-educated citizenry and workforce, we will provide opportunities throughout an individual's personal and professional journey to complete degrees, acquire training and retraining, and to engage in ongoing meaningful learning experiences.

We will work with other academic institutions, businesses, not-for-profit agencies, and government entities to elevate the quality of life in South Central Kentucky. WKU also will enhance our community by offering academic, athletic, artistic, and other events to assist, entertain, and inspire.

WKU's athletics programs are some of the most visible activities in which we engage, and they enhance the student experience, energize alumni, and generate positive publicity for the institution. Success and excellence in WKU athletics is important to our continued growth.

The Hill itself is among our greatest assets, and we must continue to strategically upgrade and enhance the spaces where we gather.

Our reach goes far beyond physical borders. WKU alumni in their communities and places of work are our greatest ambassadors, embodying the WKU ideals that began with President Cherry and continue today. We will engage our alumni in the intellectual life of the University from the moment they leave campus, maintaining the connections vital to our future successes.





A Regional Lighthouse

Establish WKU as a regional lighthouse to provide resources, attract talent, and nurture intellectual capital in the communities we serve:

- Engage with the communities we serve to be a resource and partner in finding innovative solutions to social, economic, and other challenges.
- Align university priorities with communities, business and industry, educational institutions, and others to create mutually beneficial cultural, environmental, scientific, and social opportunities for all.
- Nurture and attract intellectual capital that elevates the economies of the region and the commonwealth.
- Ensure that WKU students graduate with skills to think critically, solve problems, and engage effectively with others.
- Transform the WKU Center for Research and Development into a true Innovation Campus that engages corporations in collaborative research, incubates faculty, staff, and student ideas, cultivates and grows local businesses, and provides a hub for entrepreneurial growth and investment.



Global Learning

Leverage WKU's international reach to create a dynamic and diverse university community with robust global learning for every student:

- Continue to recruit, retain, and graduate a student population from around the world, and integrate them completely into the WKU community.
- Ensure that a world view and international issues are intentionally incorporated across the curriculum, preparing WKU graduates to enter a competitive global workforce.



Continuing Education

Facilitate continuing education, retraining, and degree completion, leveraging online resources and WKU's regional campuses:

- Create multiple pathways for individuals to complete unfinished degrees.
- Offer quality graduate programs to further lifelong learning and retraining.
- Provide certificate programs to match job market opportunities.
- Strive for a diverse assemblage of people and ideas from hiring and recruiting to retaining and retraining.



Quality of Life

Improve the quality of life regionally and support regional economic diversification:

- Provide opportunities for people of the region to be educated, entertained, assisted, and inspired outside the classroom.
- Facilitate the transferability of students and develop faculty and staff exchange opportunities with other academic institutions.
- Develop shared intellectual capital and viable products through collaborations, internships, and other partnerships.



Nurturing a global citizenry on our campus and beyond



Athletic Excellence

Support athletic excellence and the success of WKU student-athletes:

- Promote academic excellence, student success, and individual achievement for all student athletes.
- Recruit, retain and develop student-athletes, coaches, and staff who enable WKU to compete and succeed at the highest levels.



Alumni Ambassadors

Engage alumni as global ambassadors and cultivate ongoing relationships that last a lifetime:

- Incorporate alumni into our comprehensive advising program and into the development of post-graduation professional development plans.
- Bring alumni to campus to share their knowledge and engage alumni as part of our national and international educational travels.
- Incorporate alumni into undergraduate recruitment activities and as admissions ambassadors.
- Create new opportunities for alumni to participate in educational experiences and lifelong learning.



Investing in the Future

Energize and inspire individuals, foundations, and corporations to invest in the future of WKU and enable our climb to greater heights:

- Examine university-related foundations' structures to determine if there are opportunities for efficiency or simplification that will enhance our ability to attract voluntary support and eliminate confusion.
- Assemble the necessary volunteer structure and involve deans and other senior leadership in support of a comprehensive fundraising campaign to support the University's climb to greater heights.
- Align a new comprehensive Campus Master Plan to guide strategic campus growth and facility upgrades during the next decade.

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Greater Heights

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