



2026

The BIG RED MARCHING BAND

PRESEASON PRESS

Chapter
101



2026 WKU BAND STAFF

DIRECTOR OF BANDS

Dr. Gary Schallert

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF BANDS

DIRECTOR OF ATHLETIC BANDS

Dr. Matthew McCurry

ASST. DIRECTOR OF ATHLETIC BANDS

PERCUSSION / DRUMLINE

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GRADUATE ASSISTANT

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Mr. Joshua Pace

Mrs. Megan Benoit

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COLORGUARD STAFF

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Ms. Megan Healey

TOPPERETTES COACH

Ms. Maddie Robertson

BAND PHOTOGRAPHER/MEDIA

Ms. Tessa Hillman

THE 'VOICE' OF THE PRIDE

Mr. Byron Lee

STUDENT BAND STAFF

Michael Cecil

Olivia Harris

Evan Kenney

Cailee Tucker

Vacant Position - Apply Today!

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WELCOME TO THE 2026 SEASON

Tentative Performance Calendar

This calendar is TENTATIVE at this point in the season. The official calendar with dates and times will be included in the 2026 Band Handbook / Syllabus.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Location</u>
Saturday, August 22	Band Camp Performance	TBA
Saturday, September 19	WKU at Indiana [Travel]	Bloomington
Saturday, September 26	WKU vs Mercyhurst	WKU Stadium
<u>Thursday, October 8</u>	WKU vs. Missouri State	WKU Stadium
Saturday, October 24	KMEA Quarterfinals Exhibition	FSHS
<u>Tuesday, October 27</u>	WKU vs. Delaware	WKU Stadium
Saturday, November 7	WKU at MTSU [Travel]	Murfreesboro
Friday, November 13	Homecoming Parade	Downtown
Saturday, November 14	WKU vs Jax State [HC]	WKU Stadium
Saturday, November 28	WKU vs. Kennesaw State	WKU Stadium
Friday, December 4	C-USA Championship Game	TBA
December - TBA	Bowl Game	TBA

This is typically a 2-3 day trip depending on location.

Mark these performance dates on your calendar! All performances are required events for all band members. Make appropriate travel plans now. Should the football team be invited to play in a bowl game or two, the full band may be expected to attend. This could require adjustments to your holiday travel plans. We will not know a date for the bowl game until early December.



♪ DIRECTOR'S NOTE ♪

July 15, 2026

Dear BRMB Members,

Welcome to the 2026 season of the *Pride of the Hilltoppers* - The Big Red Marching Band!

This year marks the beginning of an exciting new chapter—Chapter 101 of the Big Red Marching Band. After celebrating our incredible 100-year legacy, we now have the opportunity to begin a new century of excellence together. I couldn't be more excited to start this journey with all of you, and I hope you are just as eager for the season ahead.

By becoming a member of the BRMB, you are joining something much bigger than yourself. You are now part of the band's past, present, and future. Since 1925, the Big Red Marching Band has built a tradition of excellence, fostered a strong sense of community, and served as a source of pride for Western Kentucky University. Every generation has helped shape the reputation and spirit of this ensemble, and now it is our turn to carry that tradition forward. What an incredible honor it is to follow in the footsteps of those who came before us while creating memories and traditions for those who will follow.

There truly is no experience quite like being a member of a collegiate marching band.

I can't wait to watch the iconic "W" make its way down the field, hear thousands of fans cheer "GO TOPS!", and play as our team charges out of the tunnel. From our exciting pregame traditions to dynamic halftime performances, we'll have the opportunity to entertain audiences at home, on the road, and at exhibitions throughout the region. Every performance is another chance to represent WKU with pride, passion, and excellence.

To our new members—welcome! You are about to begin a journey unlike any other. No matter where you come from or what your previous band experience has been, you now belong to a community of dedicated musicians and performers who share a common goal: striving for excellence while supporting one another every step of the way. I encourage you to embrace every rehearsal, every performance, every challenge, and every victory. Along the way, you'll build lifelong friendships, discover your place within the WKU community, and create memories that will stay with you long after your final performance.

To our returning members—welcome back! Your experience, leadership, and dedication are invaluable as we begin this new season. You set the standard for our culture and traditions, and your example will help inspire our newest members as they grow into the next generation of the BRMB. Together, with your leadership and the incredible talent and commitment of our staff, we will continue to uphold the proud tradition of earning the name, "**The Pride of the Hilltoppers.**"

Thank you for choosing to be part of this remarkable ensemble. I hope you enjoy the rest of your summer, and please don't hesitate to reach out if you need anything before we begin. Band Camp will be here before you know it, and I can't wait to see each of you as we kick off another unforgettable season.

Dr. Matthew J. McCurry
Associate Director of Bands
Director of Athletic Bands
Western Kentucky University



Dr. Matthew McCurry
Associate Director of Bands
Director of Athletic Bands

2019
Doctor of Musical Arts
West Virginia University

2009
Master of Education
Carson-Newman College

2000
Bachelor of Music Education
Instrumental / Vocal
Carson-Newman College



BRMB TRIVIA

Who was the first female drum major of the WKU Bands?



Answer:
Shirley Gray, was the first female drum major for the Big Red Marching Band and in the state of Kentucky. She and her husband, Harry, are still HUGE supporters of the BRMB and all of its endeavors.

First Things First ...

Have you registered for Marching Band?

All students wishing to participate in the Big Red Marching Band must be a registered student at Western Kentucky University or SKYCTC*.

In addition, each student must be registered for the course **MUS 347.500 - Marching Band**. If you have a problem with registration, please contact the Music Office immediately.

Marching Band meets Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 3:15 - 5:15 p.m. If you have a class that conflicts with more than 1/3 of this time, it will be necessary to change your schedule. Should a change not be possible, you must speak with the director in advance to determine if there is another option.

There is often more flexibility in your schedule than you think! Please talk to your academic advisor and explore the best options now during the summer months. Don't wait!

*Interested SKYCTC students, please contact the band office for more info.

Sign up for the **BAND** app!

The directors and staff of the Big Red Marching Band will use the **BAND app** notification system. Take a moment right now and sign up for this information service using the instructions below. This will not be a means of providing updates and information for the general public, but instructions and information relevant only to current band members. These could include weather alerts, location changes and/or cancellations. Because of space limitations, non-members, family, and friends should **NOT** register for this service.

The band directors and staff will make every effort not to overuse this system, but it is very important that you are able to get all updates and information in a timely manner.

SCAN THE QR
CODE AND JOIN
OUR BAND!

WKU-BRMB26



Staying Healthy

The health of each band member is very important. Since most band camp activities take place outdoors, the following guidelines are suggested to insure everyone's well-being.

- 1) **Stay hydrated. Drink water and sports drinks.**
- 2) **Wear light-colored clothing.**
- 3) **Use sunscreen often.**
- 4) **Wear tennis shoes during rehearsals. Wearing inappropriate footwear or going barefoot can lead to injuries.**
- 5) **Be sure to eat. Skipping meals, especially breakfast, can lead to passing out in hot conditions.**
- 6) **Get enough sleep. Marching band requires mental acuity as well as physical stamina.**
- 7) **Let someone know if you feel ill, dizzy, or faint.**



BAND CAMP

Attendance

All band camp rehearsals and activities are required. Make the necessary adjustments to your schedule (work, vacation, etc.) to ensure that you will be in attendance. Big Red Marching Band scholarships are directly related to band camp attendance at each segment.

MASTERPlan

We have been hard at work to prepare a schedule that will let first-year students attend band camp and the most important segments of the MASTERPlan program. The final band camp schedule will have both schedules in detail. A BIG thank you to the MASTERPlan staff who understand how important it is for you to also attend band camp.

On-Campus Parking

Band members should acquire needed parking permits before band camp starts. Members who are living on campus should have already registered for a permit. If you are living off-campus, make sure you have a valid pass before camp begins if you plan on parking in a campus lot. Visit the WKU Parking Services website to learn more about campus parking.

Facilities

The band makes use of many different facilities while we are at band camp. Campus administration and housekeeping are working hard to ready the buildings and spaces for the upcoming school year. Take great care to make sure that you are cleaning up after yourself and leaving spaces better than you found them. We want to be complimented on the way we clean up after ourselves. Only make use of the rooms that are assigned to us. Be where you are supposed to be, nowhere else.

Band Camp Schedule

You will receive a full camp schedule as we get closer to band camp. Right now, it is our plan to begin camp with a Saturday afternoon picnic & meeting in the Colonnade and music rehearsal on Saturday, August 12. Band camp will run from approximately 8:30am to 9:30pm each day with a break for lunch and dinner in between rehearsal times. Some days will require some schedule modifications based on University events such as TOPS Traditions Night and the President's Welcome. These adjustments will be included in the final camp schedule that you will receive before camp begins. Camp will end with a post-camp performance (location TBA) on the evening of Saturday, August 22.

Band Camp Meals

Meal plans for students will begin on Friday, August 21. For all meals up to this point, you will be provided with a ticket to Fresh Foods for lunch and a \$10 per diem for dinner. You will receive each of these during registration and it is your responsibility to keep up with them. We purchase each ticket from food services, so there are no extras. Students who are attending MASTERPlan have purchased their meals beginning on Tuesday. Once meal plans begin on Friday, members may choose where they would like to dine.

Band Camp Housing

For those members living in campus housing, early move-in is available. Colorguard, Percussion, and Leadership will be moving in on Wednesday, August 12. All other band members will be allowed to move into their campus housing on August 14 and the morning of August 15.

Alternate days are NOT POSSIBLE as Housing staff will only be available during our assigned times. All members must move-in during our assigned times. If there are extenuating circumstances, please contact the office of Housing and Resident Life for assistance.

Students living off-campus should plan to arrive and move-in to their residence before camp begins. There should be no appointments made that interfere with band camp (water, electric, etc.).

Camp Theme Days

Enjoy the camaraderie and competition throughout the week with the Camp Theme Days. See if you can be creative and come up with an outfit for each day.

Saturday	High School Pride	<i>Where ya from?</i>
Sunday	Disney Day	<i>Marvel/Pixar/101 Spotted Dogs</i>
Monday	Middle Age Monday	<i>Soccer Mom/Uncs</i>
Tuesday	British Day	<i>"It's Chewsdays innit?"</i>
Wednesday	Color Wars Wednesday	<i>What's your section color?</i>
Thursday	Theatre Thursday	<i>Favorite Musical?</i>
Friday	Last Day Luau	<i>Hawaiian Party Day!</i>
Saturday	Western Day	<i>Show Your Topper Pride!</i>

THERE'S ALWAYS FINE PRINT: In order to participate in Camp Theme Days, your outfit MUST be acceptable in public (we do have visitors), tasteful (no obscenities or unwelcome slogans), and you must be able to effectively play and march in it. Poor footwear (or no footwear) will not be allowed at camp.

UNIFORM INFORMATION

Uniforms

Uniforms will be issued to each band member during band camp registration. Each instrumentalist will be issued the following:

- ☒ Uniform Jacket and Bibbers
- ☒ Marching Band Shako (if applicable)
- ☒ Marching Band Uniform Bag (if traveling)
- ☒ Marching Band T-Shirt
- ☒ Marching Band Shorts
- ☒ Marching Band Ball Cap
- ☒ 1 Pair of Black Gloves

Specialized uniforms for Colorguard, Topperettes, and Twirlers will be assigned during band camp or clinics.

Band members should refer to the Big Red Marching Band Handbook for instructions on check-in/check-out procedures and the proper wearing of the band uniform.

We will have for you ...

MARCHING BAND T-SHIRT - This shirt will be required under your uniform in order to take jackets off in the stands or elsewhere. Your course fee covers the cost of the marching band t-shirt.

MARCHING SHORTS - These shorts will be required under your uniform as weather permits as well as during pregame rehearsals. We will also use these shorts any time we are in "summer uniform". Your course fee covers the cost of the marching shorts.

GLOVES - You will initially be provided with one pair of black gloves to begin the season, but you will be responsible for purchasing new gloves as needed. Gloves that are no longer black or are torn/tattered are not considered uniform. You may purchase gloves in the uniform room before each performance as needed.

BALL CAP - In the stands, in other outdoor performances, in "summer uniform" and at other times throughout the season, all instrumentalists will be required to wear the official band baseball-style cap. If you lose your hat, extras will be available for purchase at a price of \$15.00 throughout the season. These ball caps are for **BAND MEMBERS ONLY**. No other hats are permitted.

What you are responsible for ...

MARCHING SHOES - Every instrumentalist will need a pair of solid black **BAND** shoes. (*A traditional band shoe such as Dinkle, DrillMasters, or DSI.*) **I highly recommend the DrillMaster System Blue (or Super-DrillMaster) as an exceptional shoe for marching band.** There can be no other color present on performance shoes. If you do not already have black marching shoes, they can be purchased at most music stores that sell marching band supplies. No worn shoes or shoes that seem to be in poor condition should be on the performance field. If you have any questions, see a section leader or graduate assistant.

MARCHING SOCKS - Each band member will be responsible for providing a pair of **LONG** black socks. Socks must be **MID-CALF OR HIGHER**. Low cut socks are not considered uniform.

MARCHING BAND GEAR - You will be given the opportunity to purchase other **OPTIONAL** band gear throughout the season on the band's online web store. More information will be coming about this.

AUXILIARY MEMBERS - Because some items are custom and will be used solely by you, there will be some items that you will need to purchase. If you have any questions, please ask the band staff.

We will provide your summer uniform to include:

- Summer Uniform Tennis Skirt
- Summer Uniform Tank Top
- Hair Bow
- Earrings

What you may need to purchase at the beginning of or throughout the season:

- | | |
|----------------------|---------|
| • Rubies Gear Jacket | \$82.00 |
| • Rubies Backpack | \$49.00 |
| • Uniform Boots | \$60.00 |
| • Rehearsal Uniform | \$49.00 |
| • Uniform Sneakers | \$35.00 |
| • Makeup | \$35.00 |
| • Tights | \$10.00 |

Many of these items are one time purchases that you can use for multiple years. Once purchased, you can use them for upcoming seasons!



MUSIC & DRILL

Part Assignments

Part assignments are initially made according to the needs of the band and the faculty and staff's best judgement. Auditions for part assignments are held during registration day at band camp and are optional. You have been preassigned a part, if you are happy with that part assignment, no audition is necessary. If you wish to move to another part, a part audition is required. Please keep in mind that all parts are equally important and strong players are required on every part to ensure the best possible band sound. You will receive more information on part assignment when section rosters have been finalized.

Memorizing Music

It is our expectation that all music that is performed on the field be memorized. Don't worry, you will have plenty of reps during rehearsal to help you memorize the music without extra time outside of class. However, if you find yourself having difficulty, a little extra practice will go a long way toward memorization. Please know that the staff and section leaders are all here to help, so please do not hesitate to reach out for any assistance you might need. **All members should come to band camp having practiced and spent time with the Pregame music.** Pregame music will be available on BlackBoard by the first of August.

Drill Charts / UDB

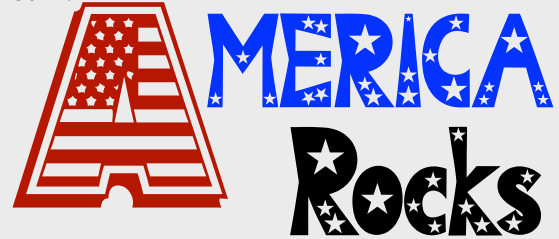
This year, the Big Red Marching Band will once again use Ultimate Drill Book for delivery of new drill and for the learning of drill on the field. Each band member will be responsible for downloading Ultimate Drill Book (free app) on your own device and creating an account. You will be provided with the information to access this material once available. If you do not have access to an electronic device, you will be able to download and print charts and music from an online source.

At Rehearsal

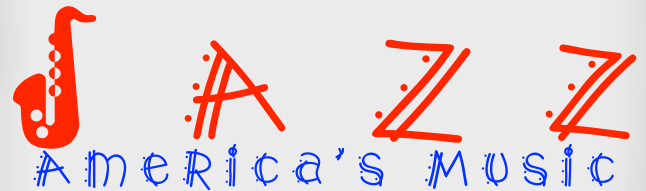
Every member should have their music and drill charts at every rehearsal. Even if you feel that it is memorized, there are times that you will need to reference your music and drill. *You may know your part well, but you might not know what happens in m.37, count 4.* Stepping out of formation to look at your neighbor's music or drill is distracting. If you come to rehearsal without the proper materials, you may be counted absent from rehearsal.

2026 Show Plans

This season's shows has been designed to create excellent entertainment value to the audience as we celebrate 250 Years of America and music that America can call its very own — Jazz!



Created in celebration of America's 250th birthday, America Rocks is a high-energy tribute to the music, spirit, and enduring pride of our nation. Featuring the iconic hits "Born in the U.S.A.," "Living in America," and "We're an American Band," this electrifying production blends patriotic pride with classic rock excitement. Powerful performances, dynamic visuals, and thrilling musical moments bring America's story to life on the field. Join us as we celebrate 250 years of freedom, unity, and unforgettable music in a show that truly rocks!



Celebrate one of America's greatest musical treasures with a thrilling marching band production that captures the energy, artistry, and excitement of jazz. Featuring the electrifying sounds of "Birdland," the timeless beauty of "Autumn Leaves," and the explosive intensity of "Nutville," this show showcases the incredible range and spirit of the genre. From smooth, soulful melodies to high-octane swing and driving rhythms, this unforgettable performance honors the rich legacy of American jazz while bringing its vibrant sound to life on the marching field.



Photo by Tessa Hillman

INSTRUMENTS & EQUIPMENT

Lyres & Flip Folders

****READ THIS SECTION CAREFULLY****

Professional quality lyres and flip folders are required for every brass and woodwind player. Lyres for your instrument are available from your preferred music vendor and should be acquired before the beginning of camp. **Using your arm to hold a flip folder leads to poor posture and bad performance habits - this cannot be allowed.** The band does not stock lyres, please make sure you come to camp with all needed accessories.

A school-owned flip folder may be checked out during band camp for your use during the season, however, many find that having their own flip folder (or two) is preferred. You will need many pages to accommodate the amount of music used during the season. If you need assistance with your flip folder, please contact a graduate assistant or the music librarian.

Instrument Repair

Please check your personal instrument to ensure it is in top playing condition. If there is a need for any repair, please have it serviced before the start of band camp. Clarinet and saxophone players should come to camp with three or more reeds that are in new condition. All instrumentalists should have all of the necessary items for keeping instruments clean and well-maintained. Supplies like valve oil, polishing cloths, and the like are not supplied. If you need instrument repair during the season, please see a Graduate Assistant who will help point you in the right direction. Please know that you are responsible for repairs to personally-owned instruments.

School-Owned Equipment

The WKU Bands have a limited amount of instruments available for rental during the marching season. Piccolos, mellophones, tenor saxophones, baritones, sousaphones, percussion, and colorguard equipment are available in the instrument check-out room. If you have a rental instrument needing repairs, please see a Graduate Assistant. There may be a loaner that you can use while your instrument is in the shop. You may be responsible for repairs on a school-owned instrument if the damage is beyond normal wear and tear.

Equipment Return

Instruments and equipment will be returned immediately following the last game of the season, usually the bowl game. At this time, the condition of the instrument will be evaluated and compared to the notes at the time of issue. It is expected that equipment be returned in the same condition that it was issued with consideration for reasonable wear and tear. Any damage beyond wear and tear will be noted at turn-in, as well as any missing parts (mouthpiece, adapters, valve buttons, toppers, etc.) and you may be financially responsible for any repairs to return the instrument to its original condition.

Equipment that is not returned will be charged to the student's TopNet account and may place a hold on your registration or graduation until returned or paid in full. Equipment owned by the school is property of the State of Kentucky and theft of this property will be handled by the appropriate authorities.



OTHER INFORMATION

Fall Rehearsals

Once the semester begins, the BRMB rehearses on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 3:15 - 5:15 pm. Marching band is a class for credit, so all rehearsals are required. Attendance policies will be outlined in the 2026 Big Red Marching Band Handbook.

Report Dates

You will receive a full band camp schedule as we get closer to camp. For now, plan on the following report dates:

Leadership, Colorguard, & Drumline

Move-in	Wednesday, Aug. 12
Percussion Meeting (6pm)	Wednesday, Aug. 12
Percussion First Rehearsal	Thursday, Aug. 13
Colorguard First Rehearsal	Thursday, Aug. 13

All Other Members

Move-In	August 14 or 15
Registration & Rehearsal	Saturday, August 15

Leadership Training

Leaders will be in training on Friday morning. Following the training sessions, you will want to be on hand to welcome new and returning members to camp. Leadership will be key to an easy registration and welcome process. Please plan to arrive early on Friday to get started.

Important Deadlines

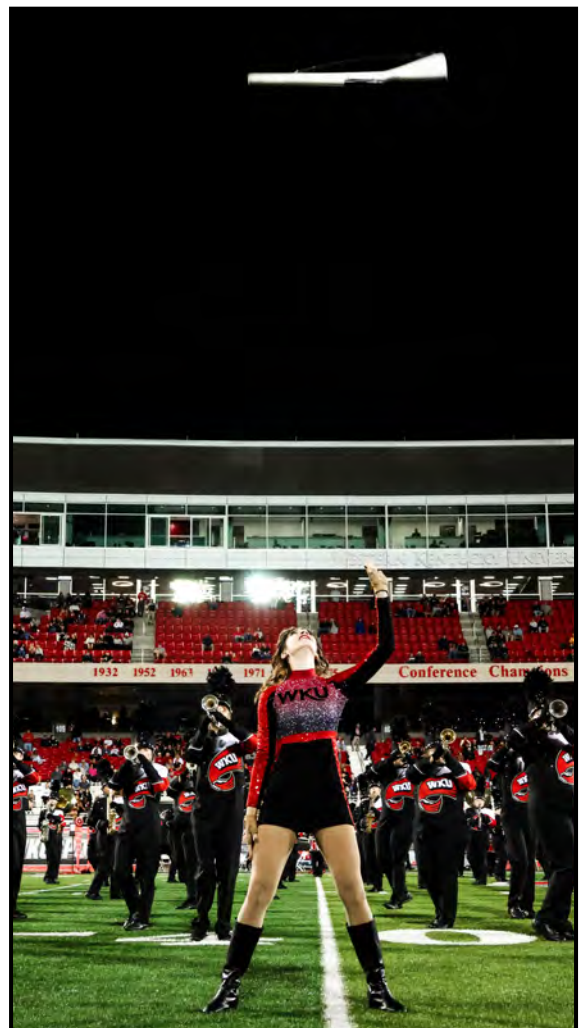
Please review the following form titles and dates listed below. It is important that we receive the requested materials, which you will receive via email, on or before the deadline. Check your TopperMail often!

Band Member Information Form	July 31
Uniform Sizing Form	July 31
Medical Information Form	August 7
Handbook Acknowledgement Form	August 12

HOW TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN COLLEGE BAND

Joining a collegiate marching band is one of the most exciting things you can do. Yes, it does take time, but it is rewarding at a level that can't be found in any other activity. Here are some tips to help you manage the transition to collegiate marching band:

- 1) Be prepared** - have your music, drill, equipment, and anything else you need at every rehearsal. Plan ahead! Practice!
- 2) Be on time** - this is something you should be used to. Being early is one time, being on time is late. Beat the whistle to block!
- 3) Come to every rehearsal** - the best ability is availability! We work hard and fast. It's amazing what you can miss in one rehearsal. Don't get behind. You will feel better for coming to class, rehearsing, and being around your BRMB family.
- 4) Manage your time** - make time for classes, to do homework, socialize, and 'me' time. Time management will be your best strategy for success in college!
- 5) Keep your body healthy** - keep your body fed, hydrated, and in good physical shape. Sleep is important, too!
- 6) Communicate** - let us know what is happening! Ask questions!
- 7) Have fun!** - This is what it's really about! We work hard to march and perform well, but enjoy every second of it!



MORE BAND OPPORTUNITIES

Fall Symphonic Band

The WKU Symphonic Band is a group of 60-100 student musicians that meet during the fall semester to perform traditional as well as contemporary wind band literature. They Symphonic Band rehearses on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3:45 to 5:15pm and performs two on-campus concerts during the fall semester. Membership in the Symphonic Band is based on competitive audition. For more information about the Symphonic Band, contact Dr. Gary Schallert, WKU Director of Bands.

Spring Wind Ensemble

The Western Kentucky Wind Ensemble is the premier concert ensemble on the WKU campus. The Wind Ensemble has performed at the Kentucky Music Educators Convention and the prestigious College Band Directors National Association Southern Division Convention on numerous occasions. The Wind Ensemble rehearses on Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 3:45-5:15p during the Spring Semester and performs two on-campus concerts as well as select tour and conference performances. Membership in the Wind Ensemble is determined by competitive audition. For more information about the Wind Ensemble, contact Dr. Gary Schallert, WKU Director of Bands.

WKU *Spirit!* Pep Band

The *Spirit!* Pep Band performs at all Hilltopper and Lady Hilltopper home basketball games and travels with the basketball teams to the Conference USA tournament and NCAA tournament. Students may receive one course hour credit by enrolling in pep band during the spring semester. The *Spirit!* Pep Band rehearses from 5:30 - 7:30pm on Thursday evenings as needed for the duration of basketball season. Members of the *Spirit!* Pep Band are selected by audition and receive stipends for each game in which they perform. For more information on the *Spirit!* Pep Band, contact Dr. Matthew McCurry, WKU Director of Athletic Bands.

Campus Community Band

The Campus Community Band is a group of students and community members that meet during the spring semester to perform traditional as well as contemporary band literature. The ensemble rehearses on Monday evenings from 6:30 - 8:30pm and performs and end of the semester concert for the campus community. Membership is open to anyone interested in performing in a concert ensemble including students, alumni, and local community members. Auditions are not required to join the ensemble, but rather for part and chair placements. For more information about the Campus Community Band, contact Dr. Gary Schallert, WKU director of Bands.



BIG RED MARCHING BAND

The Pride of the Hilltoppers