



WKU PRESIDENT **TIMOTHY C. CABONI**

Timothy C. Caboni, a 1994 Western Kentucky University graduate, returned to the Hill on July 1, 2017, as WKU's 10th president. Shortly after assuming the president role, Caboni launched a comprehensive strategic planning process aimed at developing a roadmap for the University's next decade of growth. Thus, WKU's 2018-2028 strategic plan, *Climbing to Greater Heights*, was finalized in summer 2018, and its implementation is well underway.

President Caboni quickly generated a renewed institutional focus on student-centeredness, applied research, recruitment and retention, and growing partnerships within WKU's 27-county service region and beyond. Of particular importance to Caboni is WKU's responsibility to advance the City of Bowling Green, the Commonwealth of Kentucky and the world by inspiring innovation, elevating communities and transforming lives.

Several key initiatives were launched during President Caboni's first three years at WKU, including the Summer Scholars program, the Intercultural Student Engagement Center Academy, the Burch Institute, the First Year Village, the WKU Commons, the Opportunity Fund, Innovation Campus, centralized advising and CAPE (Comprehensive Academic Program Evaluation). At the start of his third year on the Hill, Caboni announced bold changes to the University's scholarship program, increasing institutional aid by \$5.2 million (a 20% increase) - more than doubling the percentage of incoming freshmen eligible for awards in fall 2020 (84% compared to 39% in 2019).

With Caboni at the helm, WKU has celebrated historical successes. In the area of recruitment, in fall 2020 the University celebrated its largest one-year increase in the size of its incoming class compared to any class during the past three decades. This group also brought with it the highest high school GPA in WKU's history. Fall 2019's one-year retention rate of 72.9% was the highest since fall 2013 (73.1%), as were the rates for underrepresented minority (URM) students, at 59.5%. WKU's URM retention rate jumped from 85.5% (fall 2018 to spring 2019) to 89.5% (fall 2019 to spring 2020), and preliminary fall 2020 retention rate shows an increase of 3% over fall 2019.

Beyond these remarkable recruitment and retention successes, WKU's six-year graduation rate rose to 54.9% in 2020, the highest six-year graduation rate ever at the University, and during the same time WKU achieved its highest URM and low-income six-year graduation rates in eight years and awarded over 3,000 bachelor's degrees - more than the institution has awarded in any previous academic year. Additionally, in fall 2019, Caboni restructured the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) team, seeing also immediate results with WKU achieving the second highest score among Kentucky's public universities in the Council on Postsecondary Education's latest DEI evaluation (2018-19). And in 2019, WKU was awarded the Educational Fundraising Award by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) for persistent fundraising success after celebrating its record year of gifts in FY18, reaching \$45 million.