

http://www.bgdailynews.com/news/wku-president-timothy-caboni-honored-with-investiture-ceremony/article_a6532012-b1c6-5929-9f03-83c3ee479727.html

TOP STORY

WKU President Timothy Caboni honored with investiture ceremony

By AARON MUDD amudd@bgdailynews.com Apr 27, 2018



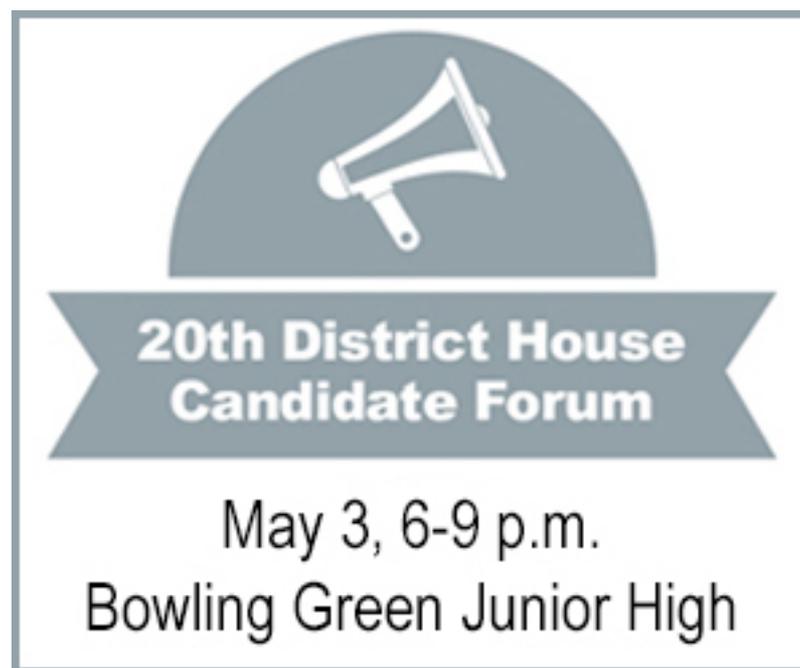
President Timothy Caboni listens during his investiture on Friday, April 27, 2018, at Centennial Mall. (Austin Anthony/photo@bgdailynews.com)

Austin Anthony

When Western Kentucky University President Timothy Caboni came to WKU as a student, he felt like he was coming home for the first time.

“This is where things clicked for me,” Caboni said, speaking during his presidential investiture Friday. “I came to understand how a university could be more like a family and how one’s peers, mentors and teachers could influence a student’s aspirations, goals and perspectives.”

During a ceremony that celebrated the start of Caboni’s presidency, he looked to the future and shared his vision for what WKU can become. The event included musical performances from WKU’s Brass Ensemble and Chorale and a poetry reading of WKU poet laureate Mary Ellen Miller’s “Welcome Home, President Caboni.”



Overall, he stressed his priorities for ensuring WKU stays affordable and accessible for students and also defended higher education’s role as more than just career preparation.

Caboni expressed concern about the cost of higher education shifting away from the state and resting “ever more squarely on the shoulders of families and students.”

Too often, he said, policymakers focus on flagship universities and elite private colleges, despite the fact most alumni graduate from universities like WKU.

“Given our role, shouldn’t we have more of a presence in this conversation,” he asked.

“More importantly, shouldn’t we lead by example, sharing the innovations we create, the creativity we employ and the commitment we demonstrate in our classrooms and laboratories every day to help solve the challenges we face in higher education?”

Among Caboni’s efforts to move the university forward is a strategic planning process, which will create a broad set of goals to guide WKU’s development over the next decade. A draft of the plan was recently posted online at www.wku.edu/strategicplan, and an open forum is scheduled at 3 p.m Wednesday in Grise Hall room 235.

During his address, Caboni outlined several initiatives to improve students’ experiences at WKU.

“We cannot afford to lose nearly 30 percent of our freshman class each year, and our students cannot afford to take on debt without earning a degree,” he said.

To confront that, WKU wants to create “a robust first-year experience” to connect students with a career and their campus. He also wants to establish a first-year village at the south end of campus to create a living learning community for students.

Another project includes the WKU Commons, which will draw on a dining services partnership with Aramark.

“Instead of simply rebuilding the Garrett Conference Center, we will invest those funds into our campus libraries, creating an intellectual hub that invigorates engagement, stimulates learning and creates a sense of community for the entire WKU family.

“We will move away from thinking of the library as a book warehouse or materials repository and we will revitalize that space to become a place where ideas are created, shared and shaped,” he said.

Caboni announced a plan to create an “Innovation Campus” by bringing WKU’s Research Foundation, Office for Research and Creative Activity and Center for Research and Development to a single location.

Caboni also affirmed his support for WKU's regional campuses, which have recently endured staffing cuts in the wake of financial challenges.

“Just because we have changed the structure under which our regional campuses will be administered does not lessen our role in providing access to four-year baccalaureate degree programs through our campuses in Elizabethtown, Glasgow and Owensboro,” he said. “Nor does it mean that we are less committed to our role in growing those economies or developing that talent.”

Additionally, a new WKU Opportunity Fund will raise \$50 million to support WKU students.



Queen Mansion Bed
Hassle Free Price \$528
Shown in Cherry (Gray, Merlot, and White Also Available)

“Beyond tuition support, the WKU Opportunity Fund will enable our students to access educational experiences that otherwise might remain out of their reach,” he said, describing those experiences as internships or study abroad trips, for example.

Caboni's wife, Kacy, will lead that effort as WKU's director of principal gifts and special projects.

Victoria Branch, a freshman from Louisville, said she came to the Caboni's investiture to get to know him better. She likes what she's seen from him.

“He just seems like he's really involved in all the student activities,” she said.

Fabian Alvarez, an instructor in WKU's English Department, said he appreciates Caboni's authenticity.

History professor Eric Kondratieff, who chairs WKU's faculty senate, said he appreciates Caboni's willingness to work with others.

"I and many others appreciate his collaborative leadership style," he said.

Laura McGee, head of WKU's Department of Modern Languages, said she appreciates how Caboni's stepped up in a challenging time for the university.

"I see some great ideas being generated and so I'm optimistic about his leadership," she said. "I think it's the beginning of a new era."

– 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.