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OUR OPINION

WKU deserves praise for Summer Scholars program, other retention efforts

22 hrs ago

By recently announcing tighter admission standards, and a new program to help underprepared students transition to meet those standards, Western Kentucky University is taking some positive steps to do right by students and boost student success.

In an email last week, WKU Provost David Lee announced that the university will no longer accept students with lower than a cumulative, unweighted 2.0 grade-point average. Additionally, it will also begin vetting applications with an index score that factors in students' high school GPA and ACT composite score.

While Lee did note the changes will affect the size of the 2019 freshman class, this is a good move for several reasons.

The first is the university would be doing a disservice by admitting students who haven't proven they have the academic skills to succeed at WKU. Effectively, it would be setting them up to fail just to collect a few more tuition dollars.

WKU President Timothy Caboni has made this point repeatedly and Lee reiterated it in his email last week.

“These new standards will affect the size of the 2019 freshman class. Of the fall 2017 incoming class, 102 enrolled freshmen would not have been eligible for admission under these new requirements ...,” Lee wrote in his email. “However, our data shows that of the

students who will no longer be admissible, fewer than one in three would persist past the first year, and only 7.3 percent would graduate in six years.”

By no longer admitting these students and instead connecting them to state community colleges, WKU is not only being more honest with students but also investing its limited resources in students who are most likely to benefit from them.

We can probably all understand how much a waste of time it is for a professor to constantly work with a student who either isn’t ready or interested in college.

This is why the new Summer Scholars program is a plus.

The program is for those students with a GPAs just above the 2.0 cutoff.



Through the new five-week Summer Scholars program that begins in July, students will earn six credit hours and, upon completion, continue to WKU in the fall semester.

This program will allow students to gain the skills and confidence to do college-level work. It will also be a critical time for students to decide what they want to do with their college career and get after it before their first semester starts.

Lee put it best in his comments to the Daily News.

“With this entryway into WKU and the preparation from the Summer Scholars, the likelihood that they will persevere and graduate is going to increase substantially,” Lee said.

We wholeheartedly agree.



