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## WKU hosts forum on university's future

AARON MUDD [amudd@bgdailynews.com](mailto:amudd@bgdailynews.com) 42 min ago



Co-chair of the Academic Innovation and Excellence Committee Rob Hale speaks during a forum on Monday, February 12, 2018, at Ogden College Hall. (Austin Anthony/photo@bgdailynews.com)

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Faculty and staff at Western Kentucky University shared their hopes and goals Monday to remake the university over the next 10 years as part of an ongoing strategic planning process.

Under their shared vision, WKU would become more welcoming and supportive of under-represented minorities, ensure fairer pay practices for employees, improve learning environments and make a better commitment to every student's success, among many other goals.

During the meeting held in the Ogden College Hall lecture hall, members from several working groups gave updates on how their group has developed its goals.

“We want to make student success the center of the university and make it the center of everything we do,” said sociology professor Jerry Daday, speaking for the Student Success and Experience Committee.

The meeting was the first of two strategic planning forums being held this week. The second is at 4 p.m. Tuesday at the Jody Richards Hall auditorium. Those unable to attend can go online to [zoom.us/j/988313305](https://zoom.us/j/988313305) to participate.

Bruce Schulte, a professor and head of WKU's Biology Department, is co-chairing the Strategic Planning Committee along with Paula Potter, a professor head of the Management Department.

At this point in the process, Schulte said feedback is highly valued by each of the working groups devoted to reimagining a different aspect of the university. More information and the opportunity to provide feedback is available online at [www.wku.edu/strategicplan](http://www.wku.edu/strategicplan).

Going forward, that input will be used to help create documents that will be forwarded to the steering committee to craft into a draft strategic plan. The plan will be continually revised with new feedback until WKU's Board of Regents considers it for approval this summer.

Rob Hale, English Department head and co-chair of the Academic, Innovation and Excellence Committee, outlined his group's goals to create an inventive learning environment for students and teachers and ways to support that.

"WKU will become a leader in innovative pedagogy," he said. "We will aspire to be the best teachers in the Commonwealth and set standards for excellence in teaching diverse student populations."

Susann DeVries, a professor and University Libraries dean, said the Budgeting Efficiency and Infrastructure Committee has been working to support the university's workforce.

"Our overarching goal is to create a workforce that carries out the institutional mission, values (and) diversity," she said.

According to the committee's plan, that includes developing a strategic staffing plan for faculty and staff and budgeting resources based on that plan. It also means reviewing employee compensation and prioritizing fairer pay practices based on market realities.

WKU Dean of Students Lynne Holland and associate Gender and Women's Studies professor Molly Kerby presented their group's plan to improve diversity, equity and inclusion across campus.



The committee has set five-year goals including increasing the diversity of WKU faculty and staff by 15 percent, boosting under-represented minorities by 20 percent and decreasing “all intolerant behavior targeting faculty, staff and students including, but not limited to, bullying, harassment, hate speech, violence and salary inequity by 75 percent.”

In response to a question about the committee’s goals being too ambitious, Kerby said the committee intended to dream big and that results could be achieved with sensitivity training. Holland agreed, adding that part of the university’s mission is to break down ignorance of those sensitivities.

Daday stressed the importance of making student success the job of everyone connected to WKU. One strategy includes requiring all students to complete an academic, financial and professional plan before the completion of their second semester.

Daday said this could generally be influenced by a student’s interests. Even if they haven’t picked a specific major, they would be more actively encouraged to take courses within their interest area.

“We believe that every student admitted to WKU will succeed. They’ll graduate. We’ll help them find their path,” he said. “By admitting them, we say we believe in you. And no more excuses.”

Sarah Haught, assistant director of the Academic Advising and Retention Center, said she was encouraged by the committees' progress.

“It’s good to see positive movement and forward thinking ideas come to the table,” she said.

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## **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.