

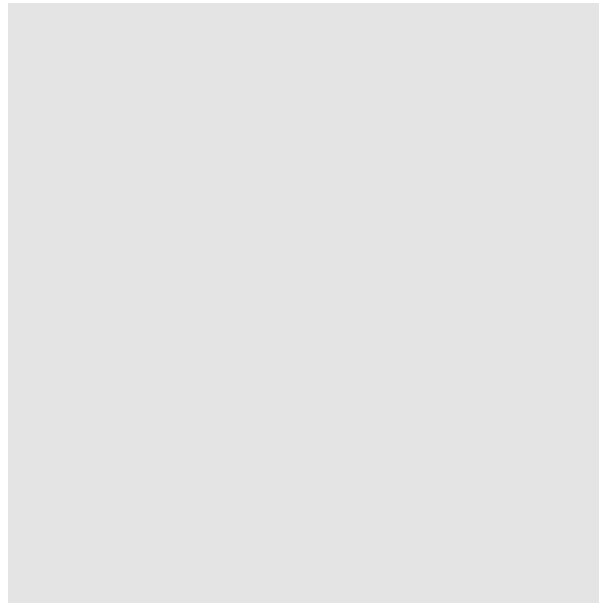


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WKU to tighten admission standards, expects enrollment dip

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David Lee

Submitted

Western Kentucky University is tightening its admission standards, a move that its provost says will probably affect the size of the 2019 freshman class but lead to better retention and student success rates down the line.

In an email to faculty and staff, Provost David Lee recently announced that the university will no longer accept students with a cumulative, unweighted grade-point average below 2.0.

Lee said the university hopes to better serve underprepared students by either working with them through a new college prep program held in the summer or by referring them to schools in the Kentucky Community and Technical College System.

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

“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 told the Daily News.

The change was necessitated by the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, which voted in June to establish minimum admission requirements, Lee wrote in the email.

However, Lee said in an interview that WKU had already been looking at the predictors of student success.

“We would probably be doing this even without the change at the state level,” he said.

Lee said the change is part of several reforms President Timothy Caboni is considering and reflects a long-held view from faculty and staff that admitting underprepared students is setting them up to fail.

“That’s not fair to those students. That’s not appropriate for us,” he said.

That’s why, in addition to the GPA change, the university will also use an admission index score to evaluate all applicants.

Under the new standards, beginning freshmen will need at least a 2.0 GPA and a composite admissions index score of at least 60. The score is a student's high school GPA multiplied by 20, plus their ACT composite score, with high school GPA contributing at most 50 points, Lee wrote in the email.



A CAI calculator is available at wku.edu/admit for prospective students who want to check their eligibility before submitting an application for admission, Lee wrote.

For those who are ineligible, Lee wrote that the staff in the Office of Admissions and the Academic Advising and Retention Center will connect students to KCTCS colleges. After completing 24 hours, students can apply to transfer to WKU.

These changes will mean fewer students in the 2019 freshman class.

“Of the fall, 2017 incoming class, 102 enrolled freshmen would not have been eligible for admission under these new requirements, and 244 first-time students would have been admitted via the Summer Scholars program,” Lee wrote. “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.

“Despite the budgetary challenges that we are navigating, we cannot in good conscience continue to enroll underprepared students who have very little chance of success.”

Ad

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