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TOP STORY

WKU staff push for student success in strategic plan

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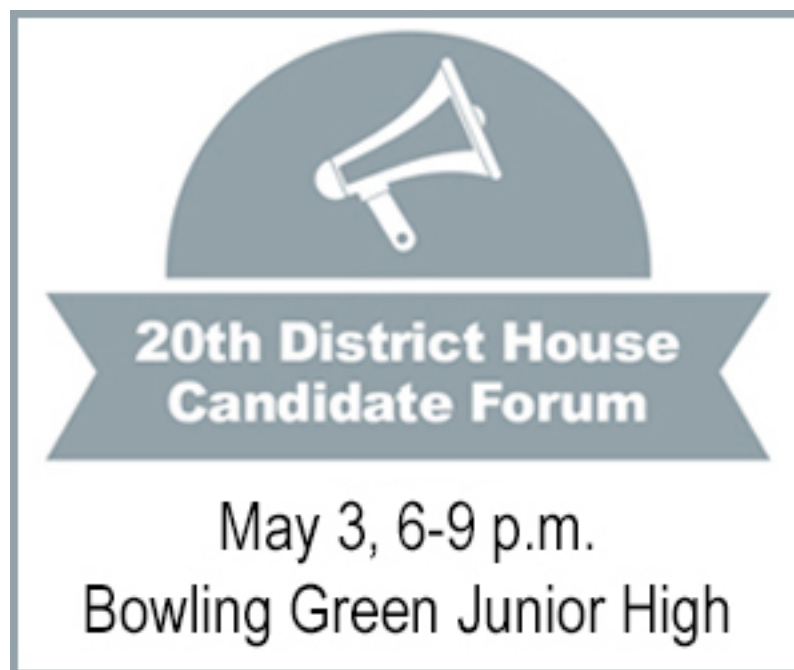
Western Kentucky University faculty, staff and students gather for a strategic planning open forum in Grise Hall's auditorium Wednesday. The university is creating a 10-year strategic plan that will map out its priorities.

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More competitive pay for staff and greater cost transparency for students are just a few of the priorities outlined in a 10-year strategic plan for Western Kentucky University.

WKU faculty, staff and students gathered Wednesday in the Grise Hall auditorium to discuss a draft version of the university's long-term strategic vision. The university's Board of Regents will consider approving the plan this summer.

"The thing that pulls us all together is that we are here for student success," said Paula Potter, head of WKU's Management Department and co-chair of the Strategic Planning Steering Committee.



Six working groups focused on student success, diversity and other themes have contributed to the draft strategic plan, which is available online at www.wku.edu/strategicplan.

The plan's goals range from improving students' overall experience at WKU to promoting diversity, inclusion, environmental sustainability and personal health, among others.

It also includes establishing a "cost of college" for prospective students. It lists as a component of that to "protect entrants from unknown increases in costs" over the typical time to complete a degree.

In an interview after the forum, Potter said that goal means ensuring students understand the real cost of attending WKU, along with what it takes to succeed in campus life.

Steering Committee co-chair Bruce Schulte, who directs WKU's Biology Department, added that it could include giving prospective students a total cost of college with expected price increases over the course of their time at the university.

"We have not set what that plan is," he said.

He suggested new students should have a personal development plan that includes a financial planning aspect. The university could work with students to help them figure out how much they need to work and plan their courses around that, he said.



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Although the plan deals in generalities at the moment, the next step in the process is to use data and specific measures to hone in on those goals.

Schulte said the process is still open to feedback.

"We look at this as a real opportunity for positive change," he said.

Those interested in offering feedback can email www.wku.edu/strategicplan/input.php.

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