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\$250,000 gift will support WKU's Center for Leadership Excellence

AARON MUDD amudd@bgdailynews.com 1 hr ago

John Paul Blair, Dr. Phillip W. Bale, Kristen T. Bale and President Timothy C. Caboni. Photo courtesy of WKU.

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A \$250,000 gift to Western Kentucky University's Center for Leadership Excellence will support the center's outreach efforts and the development of a new generation of leaders on the Hill.

Phillip Bale, a family physician in Glasgow who serves as chair of WKU's Board of Regents, made the gift with his wife, Kristen Bale, who has also served on the board.

“We understand what a great university (WKU) is,” Phillip Bale said in an interview Monday.

Kristen Bale said in a news release that she hopes the gift will help the community and region.

“A strong university affects the entire region,” she said. “WKU has far-reaching influence that positively impacts innumerable individuals throughout our commonwealth, including our own children. We hope to strengthen our community as a result.”

The Kristen T. and Phillip W. Bale Leadership Excellence Fund was created through a combination of an outright gift and a provision in the couple’s estate plans, a news release said. The gift will help advance the center’s stated mission to serve “as a resource that advances the understanding and applications of leadership in contemporary society.”

“I think it’s fantastic that they’ve done this,” said Cecile Garmon, director of the Center for Leadership Excellence. “I’m delighted that they want to manage it through this center.”

Garmon said the goals for the endowment are still being worked out.

Phillip Bale suggested the endowment could generally focus on leadership development efforts at WKU, such as shaping future members of the university’s Board of Regents. He stressed that good leadership is critical for the success of any organization’s mission and he wanted to support that at WKU.

“It just felt like a good time for us to do something that we have reason to expect will be meaningful for Western Kentucky University,” Phillip Bale said of the gift.

WKU President Timothy Caboni described the couple as an example of the best WKU has to offer, he said in a news release.

“Phillip and Kristen are long-time friends of WKU, and we are grateful for the tremendous support they continue to provide,” Caboni said. “This gift is one example of many that demonstrates their selfless service and their strong belief in what we do at WKU. We

appreciate their generous contributions and all they do for our University.”

Both Phillip and Kristen Bale have a long track record of service to WKU.

Phillip Bale has served on WKU’s Board of Regents since 2013 and served as chair of the WKU Presidential Search Committee that chose Caboni as WKU’s 10th president.

Additionally, he serves as a member of the WKU Foundation Board of Trustees and was inaugural chairman of the Kentucky Museum Board of Directors, the news release said.

Kristen Bale also served on WKU’s Board of Regents from 1992 to 2005 and was the chair from 2000 to 2003. She was on the Presidential Search Committee that selected Gary Ransdell as WKU’s ninth president.

She also serves on the Student Life Foundation Board of Directors, and she has served on the WKU Foundation Board of Trustees, the Kentucky Museum Advisory Council and the Clinical Education Complex Charter Committee. She helped found the WKU Sisterhood, a women’s philanthropy organization.

Although the couple first met at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Phillip Bale said WKU has since become he and his wife’s adopted alma mater.

Bale said they made the gift to express their appreciation for the university’s faculty, staff and students for being part of their lives.

“This is largely out of gratitude,” he said.

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