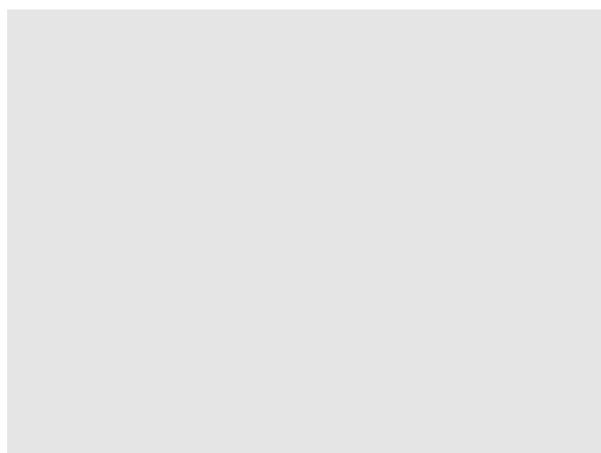


https://www.messenger-inquirer.com/opinion/editorials/wku-community-working-to-rise-above-adversity/article_a8521077-f1a5-54c2-beb5-2c9d39b0151d.html

WKU community working to rise above adversity

By Timothy C. Caboni In My View

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Western Kentucky University president
Tim Caboni

A pandemic is a once-in-a-lifetime experience you hope you never have. Yet adversity has a way of allowing people and organizations to demonstrate their best. At Western Kentucky University, that has happened several times since COVID-19 became such a major disruption to our lives.

When COVID-19 first appeared, we began working to ensure the well-being of our students studying abroad, sometimes taking extraordinary steps to bring them back to the U.S. safely. That experience helped us be better aware when the virus appeared in the U.S. In one week, our faculty transitioned more than 2,500 classes online, completed more than 700 hours of Zoom and Blackboard training and created more than 2,500 micro-lecture videos. At the same time, staff worked tirelessly to help our students move from campus, securing belongings and making sure their needs were met.

The priority was, and remains, the health and safety of our students, faculty and staff, and the communities which we serve.

During the summer, more than 40 faculty and staff members spent countless hours researching and drafting plans for a safe and successful restart this fall. Hundreds more have spent thousands of hours putting those plans into play. Using the best advice available, our plan is built to be thorough yet adaptable due to the changing nature of this situation. I couldn't be more proud of what has been accomplished in response to this crisis.

On Monday, we will begin the fall semester, continuing to live alongside the virus that has changed every aspect of our daily lives. This is important. While this will not be a typical fall semester on the Hill, face-to-face instruction is important to our students — they value the total college experience we create at WKU.

Our students are not alone. Faculty and staff yearn for the renewal of personal interaction with students and colleagues. And the communities our campuses serve are eagerly awaiting the return of the economic, social and cultural benefits that come with the presence of a university.

As we all stand to gain, we must ALL pull together to make life in our new COVID-19 reality to work, both on campus and off. Our mantra has been consistent: wear a mask, stay six feet apart and wash your hands. Sound choices from our communities, both on campus and off, will allow us to successfully navigate the pandemic until vaccines and treatments are developed.

Our Healthy on the Hill website (www.wku.edu/healthyonthehill) is the repository for a wealth of information about our plans for a successful fall semester, including videos, quick tutorials and an ever-growing list of frequently asked questions. Review the information. And if you have questions, or suggestions, please use the email address listed to contact us.

We are all working through circumstances for which none of us was fully prepared. Yet our campuses, and our communities, have pulled together, exhibiting the creativity, expertise, determination and dedication — grit if you will — necessary for success. It remains up to EACH of us to take, and continue, the actions needed to make that success happen.

Adversity is defining, for good and bad. At WKU, working with our constituencies and communities, we will shine above this adversity for the betterment of us all.

Timothy C. Caboni is president of Western Kentucky University.

