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Caboni: WKU will restore cut salaries of university faculty, staff

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Timothy Caboni

Western Kentucky University President Timothy Caboni said Friday the university will roll back the salary cuts employees took this year that were enacted to achieve some \$27 million in spending reductions as part of a round of annual budget belt-tightening spurred by the coronavirus pandemic.

“When we began that, we said that we would remain committed to restoring those as soon as it was fiscally feasible to do so,” Caboni told the university’s Board of Regents on Friday during the group’s fourth-quarter meeting. “Today, I’m very pleased to announce – due to the hard work and persistence of faculty, the way in which we reduce spending, our self-discipline on searches and positions – that all university-wide centralized salary

reductions implemented in response to the COVID pandemic will end this month.”

Caboni wrote in a follow-up message to faculty and staff, released shortly after his announcement Friday, that “additionally, faculty and staff will receive reimbursement for the amount withheld since July 1. Therefore, on Dec. 18, your paycheck will include your fully restored salary for December, as well as a retroactive payment for salary reductions made July through November.”

Along with expressing his personal gratitude to faculty and staff, Caboni also wrote in his memo that to “continue to meet and exceed our budget targets through the end of the fiscal year, we must remain diligent throughout the spring semester in the execution of the same hiring and controlled spending practices we implemented so well this fall. It’s clear that small, incremental contributions from across the university result in significant, collective savings. I’m confident that

we can redouble those efforts and continue the good work we've done this semester.”

During a press event that followed Friday's meeting, the Daily News asked Caboni if the move means that he and other administrators, who also took salary cuts, would be included in the restoration. In April, Caboni said he would take a 10% pay cut and forego “all of the bonuses afforded to me.” Caboni's salary is \$416,016, resulting in a cut of \$41,601.60.

Caboni said administrators are included in the salary restoration, but that he will continue to donate the cut portion of his salary to the WKU Opportunity Fund, a financial assistance funding program for students in need.

In other business Friday, WKU's Board of Regents welcomed its newest member: Faculty Regent Shane Spiller, a professor of management in the Gordon Ford College of Business. Spiller was elected to the position by faculty, and

he replaces former Faculty Regent Claus Ernst as their representative on the governing board.

Ethan Logan, the university's vice president for enrollment and student experience, also offered an update on where WKU stands with spring 2021 enrollment projections.

Logan pointed to an expected spring enrollment of 11,802, calling it "relatively flat," compared to enrollment this fall, minus 60 students. The trend holds some positives, but the university does need to improve its outreach to "at-risk" students, like minority students and low-income students, Logan said.

The university is continuing to remind students who haven't registered for spring classes to do so, Logan said. WKU's retention rate remains mostly steady this year, he said.

"That's what we're really trying to work on is to capture that last segment of registration and involvement with students," Logan said.

The board also signed off on obtaining a \$10 million unsecured line of credit from Truist Bank, formerly BB&T Bank. The line of credit will be tapped only if revenue collections don't align with the university's bill due dates.

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