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OUR OPINION

Martenses step up in big way for WKU

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Congratulations and gratitude are in order for longtime Western Kentucky University supporters Jim and Eva Martens, whose \$5 million commitment to the university will be honored with the renaming of the campus' alumni center.

WKU's Board of Regents approved Friday the name change, which will reestablish the 9-year-old facility the Eva and Jim Martens Alumni Center.

The center was originally named for Dale Augenstein, a 1981 WKU graduate and former WKU Alumni Association national board of directors president, who provided a \$1 million lead gift in 2010 that led to construction of the alumni center. The center was dedicated in 2013.

"We are grateful that Dale Augenstein made a significant financial commitment at a critical time to serve as the catalyst for the construction of the alumni center," WKU spokesman Jace Lux said. "The WKU Alumni Association and Mr. Augenstein reached a mutual agreement that his name could be transitioned to another part of the project if

the Alumni Association could secure a larger naming commitment to ensure the facility is preserved and maintained.”

The plaza in front of the alumni center where the well-visited Big Red statue is located will now be named the Augenstein Alumni Plaza.

Information provided by WKU said the Martenses have a 50-year record of enthusiastic support of the university, ranging from financial gifts to contributions of time to various campus organizations. This \$5 million commitment will benefit not only the alumni center, but also men’s basketball, football and the Hilltopper Athletic Foundation.

“Western means a lot to us,” Jim Martens said in a statement. “The welcoming spirit of Western Kentucky University that was extended to me more than 50 years ago is still alive and well. I can’t describe how much I love Western.”

The magnitude of the Martenses’ commitment makes their love for WKU quite clear, and it is apparent that the university is – and will be – a better place thanks to their spirited involvement.

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