



⚠ Weather Alert

Special Weather Statement



**Celebrating 80
Years of Care.
One Patient
at a Time.**

Home / News

http://www.bgdailynews.com/news/caboni-reflects-on-first-days-as-president-looks-ahead/article_9f61589f-fac1-5abf-8e0d-584d4615ad27.html

Caboni reflects on first 100 days as president, looks ahead

By AARON MUDD amudd@bgdailynews.com Oct 12, 2017

After 100 days on the job, Western Kentucky University President Timothy Caboni shared his impressions and upcoming priorities Wednesday at a meeting of the Bowling Green Kiwanis Club.

“I spent the first three months visiting with folks in the community and across campus,” Caboni told club members at First Christian Church. “I really want to understand: What are our shared aspirations as a community for this university? What do we believe in? Where do we want to go together?”

Caboni has traveled across the state, met with state and federal lawmakers and spent time recruiting students in Lexington, Louisville, Elizabethtown, Owensboro and as far away as Chicago.

Despite all that work, Caboni said he's not getting complacent.

"The first 100 days are over. Everybody thinks that we've done the hard part and now we can take a break," he said. "We've begun the second 100 days, which is really about strategic planning."

Caboni said the strategic planning process, which will be a months-long effort to evaluate WKU's priorities, involves 75 people from the university, community and state and includes WKU's Board of Regents.

"I've also tasked our budget council with thinking differently about how we allocate our scarce resources," he said, describing WKU's budget model as "built for a different era."

"What I charged them to do is think about how might we build a model that rewards success, rewards performance, incentivizes folks to do what's important for us as a university," he said.

Caboni said it makes sense for the state to begin to tie funding for universities to performance on metrics such as degree production.

"We're going to work hard on that, and we're going to make sure our budget model is aligned to it," he said.

After his remarks, Caboni took questions from club members.

Club member and Bowling Green City Commissioner Brian "Slim" Nash asked for an update on the suspension of WKU's swim team in the wake of a hazing scandal. In 2015, then-WKU President Gary Ransdell suspended the program for five years.

Caboni said he didn't have an update to offer because the suspension hasn't been lifted.

“We’ve said that we’ll make a decision on that as it gets closer to the end of the suspension,” he said. “We’re not even halfway through that yet. So there’s no real update on it, but we’re aware that there is a clock ticking and at some point we will make that decision.”



In an interview after the meeting, Caboni said WKU is communicating with state lawmakers about ongoing pension reform efforts to make state pension funds more financially sound.

He said the university’s hope is that every person in the Kentucky Employees Retirement System and Kentucky Teachers’ Retirement System remains in the system and that there are no changes.

“We also have asked, though, that any new employee that we hire can go into a defined-contribution system,” he said.

Caboni said the benefit costs for employees is a huge expense for WKU.

“In the KERS, for example, pension costs have gone from 8 percent to 48 percent of salary and this year it will go up to 84 percent,” he said.

Caboni said he'd like for WKU to go to a similar system to those in place at the University of Louisville and the University of Kentucky.

“We’re paying almost \$1 in benefits for every \$1 in salary,” he said. “That’s not sustainable.”

– *Follow education reporter Aaron Mudd on Twitter @BGDN_edbeat or visit bgdailynews.com.*

– Follow education reporter Aaron Mudd on Twitter @BGDN_edbeat or visit bgdailynews.com.

Aaron Mudd

Education reporter. Covers education and related issues, focusing primarily on the Bowling Green and Warren County public school districts and Western Kentucky University.