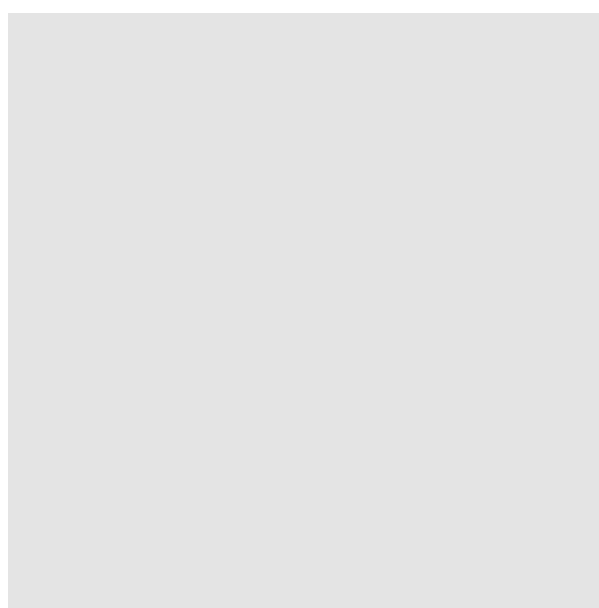


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## Faculty regents predicts budget changes for WKU

By AARON MUDD [amudd@bgdailynews.com](mailto:amudd@bgdailynews.com) Oct 14, 2017



Barbara Burch

The race for a new faculty representative on Western Kentucky University's governing board is tightening, with two candidates expected to vie for the position in a runoff election Friday.

Liz Sturgeon, an associate professor of nursing and the vice chair of WKU's University Senate, is organizing the election of a new faculty regent to replace Barbara Burch on the university's Board of Regents.

After an indecisive election last week, Sturgeon said in an email that a runoff election will be held Friday between Claus Ernst, a university distinguished professor in the Mathematics Department, and Journalism professor Mac McKerral.

Regardless of who wins, faculty regent Barbara Burch will have passed the torch by the time the Board of Regents meets again for a quarterly meeting Oct. 27.

Looking back, Burch said she's honored to serve as faculty regent and proud of how she represented faculty at WKU.


"I was able to bring some additional perspectives to the board," she said.

Burch also said she's served during a unique time in the university's history and is happy about the result of a months-long search for a new university president. As she looks ahead, she's optimistic about the board's ability to navigate new challenges.

"I think the board has a good handle on what our challenges are and who we are as an institution," she said, adding she's glad to hear WKU President Timothy Caboni talk about defining WKU's identity and future. "I feel very good about where we're heading."

But as the board looks ahead, WKU's faculty are reporting low morale. A recent 2016-17 Faculty Worklife Survey showed that more than 70 percent of faculty respondents rated morale as either "poor" or "very poor."

Survey results showed dissatisfaction with faculty compensation, and also indicated dissatisfaction with the Board of Regents.

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As much as 33.81 percent of 349 respondents strongly disagreed that the board makes academics a top priority and 31.41 percent of 347 respondents strongly disagreed that “the board has a genuine interest in seeking input from the faculty, staff and student regents.”

“I think the faculty has been very frustrated and very disappointed and you see that in those survey results,” Burch said. “That’s been largely because this university ... has really been one in which the faculty see priorities on expenditures not being priorities to address compensation for people.”

Going forward, Burch said WKU will have to make changes to its budget model to better fit financial realities. Burch said WKU has entered the fiscal year with an \$11 million budget deficit and that more will likely be added this year.

“Do I think it could mean some programs are eliminated or consolidated ... I think it’s kind of naive to think that it isn’t going to happen,” she said. “It would be naive to think that we can do everything that we’re doing now in the same way and afford it. Some things are going to change.”

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## **Aaron Mudd**

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