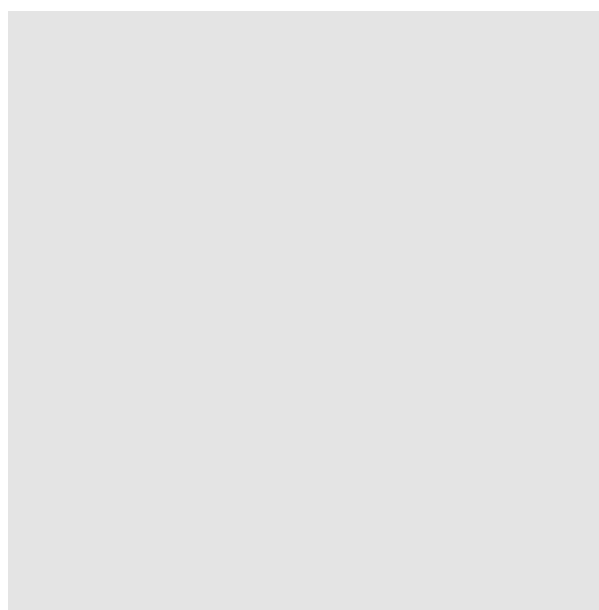


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## Caboni: WKU to hold raises, review vacancies amid budget concerns

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Clinton Lewis

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Salary increases will be put on hold at Western Kentucky University and only job vacancies that meet strategic needs will be filled under changes made by President Timothy Caboni to help stabilize WKU's financial situation.

“Only those positions that meet critical needs, meet strict standards for strategic needs, result in cost savings or efficiencies or are deemed to fulfill essential services will be approved to proceed,” Caboni wrote in a campuswide email Monday.

Caboni said the changes are needed in light of a more than \$10 million “structural imbalance” in the university's budget. The current year's budget is balanced using one-time money left over from last year, but that's only a temporary fix, according to the email.

“We also know that given trend lines in enrollment, we likely will be down in full-time students again this year,” Caboni wrote. “Add to that pressures from the state, including the public pension crisis, and we have significant financial concerns we must address now.”

A Personnel Actions Approval Committee made up of staff in the General Counsel’s office, Human Resources and the Office of the Provost will review all requests to fill positions, according to the email. Grant funded positions are exempt.

Additionally, “reclassifications, temporary rate increases, salary adjustments and stipends also will be put on hold for the foreseeable future,” Caboni wrote.

“I know that this action will create short term discomfort for all of us across campus,” Caboni wrote. “However, the significant headwinds we face require difficult decisions. I’m asking each of you to make the conscious effort to think beyond your individual unit and consider what is best for the entire university and our collective future.”

Ann Mead, senior vice president for finance and administration, will oversee the approval process for personnel requests effective immediately. In an interview, Mead said the change in approach is not a hiring freeze.

“This gives us an opportunity to move more cautiously in creating new positions or filling existing positions,” she said.

An example of a position that might be filled under the new approach is an admissions counselor “because student recruitment is very important,” Mead said.

Mead said the university faces significant uncertainties about what revenue it will have available. She said personnel make up the biggest chunk of WKU's costs and is therefore an obvious place to look for cost savings.

In a recent interview, Caboni said the university's mounting pension contribution costs to the Kentucky Employees Retirement System are a major concern.

"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, after speaking to the Bowling Green Kiwanis Club last week about his first 100 days in office. "We're paying almost \$1 in benefits for every \$1 in salary. That's not sustainable."

Going forward, Caboni vowed in his email to work with the campus community.

"I am committed to being transparent and working together to determine what are our shared aspirations and how we get there," he wrote. "To be successful, we must ensure that those areas on which we will focus have the necessary support to be successful."

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