Five years ago, WKU ranked dead last in faculty salaries compared to all our benchmark institutions. That is still true today. Why has nothing changed, and do you have any interest in giving any concrete assurances that WKU faculty will not continue to be so woefully underpaid and, by extension, so undervalued?

Why do you refuse to take any responsibility for the colossal failure of our recently built and even more recently demolished dormitories?

Why has enrollment declined every year since you became president of WKU?

Will there be a cost-of-living adjustment on January 1 this year?

Faculty have seen relatively modest salary growth, while compensation for senior administrators has increased substantially since President Caboni took office in 2017. At a time when faculty have not received a cost-of-living salary adjustment and are experiencing declining purchasing power, the university continues to make significant investments in administrative compensation. How does the administration justify this disparity in compensation growth, and what specific, measurable commitments will be made to improve faculty salaries?

1) What would it take to make faculty (and staff) pay raises, whether for cost of living or to address things like time at rank, a regular, annual budget item? We don't expect WKU to be able to magically fix salary issues, either in the short or long term, but what would it take for salary adjustments to be considered part of WKU's essential expenses?
2) Alternately, if MTSU (one of our benchmark institutions, facing very similar challenges as WKU) recently made substantial and lasting salary adjustments (see https://www.mtsu.edu/president/salary-increases/) last year, why can't WKU's administration begin similar planning to demonstrate that faculty are a values part of our university?

Please explain to us your strategy for improving faculty compensation over the next 5 years.

The RAMP model is designed primarily for an institution that sees revenue growth. But WKU's state support and enrollment continue to decline. Have you considered changes to BEC's charge, to reflect this dynamic?

What concrete plans are in place to make measurable annual progress toward bringing faculty salaries in line with those at our benchmark institutions? Additionally, what specific strategy does the university have for providing consistent annual salary increases that, at a minimum, keep pace with increases in the cost of living while also allowing for meaningful merit-based raises?

1. What is the status of annual faculty raises, other than free tickets and drink passes to two games?
2. Is the President aware of the consequences to undergraduates if the proposed "Big Red Gen Ed" is passed? Students will be less prepared for work after graduation with foundations and connections courses.

1. The ratio of students to liaison/instruction librarians at WKU is 3,184:1 compared with a 1,972:1 average across seven of our benchmark institutions. With information literacy and critical thinking being on the KGP Ten Essential Skills list, how can you justify prioritizing staff hires to keep the building open over credentialed research and instruction experts that have more long-term impact on student success?

2. Why are deans being allowed to hire external consultants when their units are consistently understaffed and underpaid? Our faculty have more than enough experience and expertise to undergo strategic planning, online instruction, co-curricular engagement initiatives, and many other things when treated with respect and adequately reimbursed -- why is there no incentive for administrators to invest in their people?

Previously it has been suggested that one way faculty could obtain an increase in compensation would be to get an offer from another university. Ethically, that's quite problematic when a faculty member is not truly considering accepting another offer. Generally we only are able to bring two people to campus for a visit when we have a line to fill. I truly hope one (or both) of those individuals is not following that strategy. There needs to be an alternative manner to address this issue.

Is there any plan for faculty raises in the near future? We are earning less every year due to inflation and the work load has increased for many of us.

Would you be willing to engage with the Faculty Senate to come up with ways to ensure faculty salaries are restored to a level equal to the median of our benchmark institutions over a five-year period?

What is it that keeps you here at WKU?
Why WKU and not somewhere else?

1. What are your plans for increasing faculty pay relative to inflation? It's becoming increasingly difficult to pay for groceries, bills, and childcare. We're starting to have to make tough decisions about finances and not able to save any money each month.
2. In some colleges, there has been no college level support for faculty or students to present first-authored work at conferences for a number of years. Faculty and students are paying out of pocket to present at conferences, because conference presentations are expected for the job and/or to be competitive for doctoral programs after WKU. There is also no longer IT support for crucial software needed to do research. In addition, some departments are being forced to take fewer graduate students to fully fund the few that we are able to accept; when our original packages were highly competitive for master's level students. Coupled with a non-R2 workload with heavy teaching and service requireemtns, all of this makes it extremely difficult to faculty to support their research, publish, and compete for grants. It is also increasing faculty burnout because we're expected to do more with less. With the plans to trying to shift to an R2 what are your priorities for supporting faculty in this effort?

Given the budgetary issues, why are we pressing so hard to become an R2 institution at the moment? I don't feel like we have found an area where there is a true need for a Ph.D. program that the state doesn't already offer. It feels like we are climbing the proverbial mountain simply because it's there.

When are we going to get a real raise?

Why is it so difficult/impossible for faculty/staff to have children day care services on campus? Not having this service requires lots of us to leave campus early every day. Also, the cost is high. This is truly a service that could be greatly enhanced from its current state and would impact so many of us.

Faculty have experienced years in which salaries have not kept pace with inflation and salary compression is a significant problem. These are not simply morale issues; they affect faculty retention, recruitment, and the long-term strength of the university.

What specific, measurable commitment is the administration prepared to make to address salary compression and provide regular cost-of-living adjustments for faculty, and where does improving faculty compensation rank among the university's budget priorities when difficult funding decisions are made?

True or False. If divisions of staff were granted a 4-day work week outside summer months, all staff in that division would choose the same day of the week to be off.

What is the status of pay AY2627 faculty/staff pay increases?

What is the current enrollment status at WKU and how successful were our recruiting efforts for Fall 26?

When will faculty be given a raise that allows us to live without taking on extra jobs to make a living?

The BEC votes on only two things - faculty and staff raises pool, and award of 0.13% of the WKU budget (if such money exists) to fund support function initiatives. Would you be willing to modify the BEC's functions so it has the ability and authority to hold colleges and business units accountable for making sound decisions?

As the University of Kentucky and the University of Louisville continue to grow their undergraduate enrollment, what challenges do you see WKU facing to compete to attract undergraduates, whether traditional students, non-traditional students, or online learners? How have you seen WKU position itself to tackle the challenge of competing against the state flagship universities? What input do stakeholders (employers, community leaders, and legislators) offer to you in support of our competitiveness?

We offer the border scholarship, and students from many states could benefit from it. I know we have some students from border states, but our enrollment from them should be more robust.

What is the plan to recruit these students?

What, if anything, can we infer about WKUs positioning with regards to international students and importantly, international experiences for WKU students, given the restructuring of the Global Learning and International Affairs office? While we may say that we are in support, ultimately, financial constraints often exclude those who may experience the greatest benefit from these activities.

The recently Faculty Welfare Committee survey showed extremely low faculty morale, and faculty continue to leave WKU due to disproportionately low pay, pay compression, and declining working conditions. What will you do, concretely, to improve working conditions and pay for faculty, knowing that faculty working conditions are student learning conditions?

The whole point of the RAMP model was to give colleges their own fiscal responsibility and management. Why are deans still being required to seek approval from the Provost for each faculty position? This seems counter to the whole point of RAMP (i.e., decentralization).

Is there any chance that adjunct professors will ever be adequately compensated? I love working for WKU; my colleagues are like a second family to me and I am invested in the success of my students. However, when I look at what I am paid compared to the hours I put into teaching, planning, and working with students outside of class, I could make more per hour at a fast food restaurant. It is demeaning. We are paid a pittance and do not even receive cost of living raises. It does not make financial sense to work here.

While the work that WKU leaders have done to address the significant budget gap over the last six years is commendable, and the focus on increasing net tuition revenue is laudable, the significant, enrollment declines over the past three years in particular are concerning. Why has WKU chosen not to invest in a full-time enrollment management VP and continued to lean on an interim VP? Particularly, as the fall off the demographic cliff is beginning, investing in a full-time enrollment management specialist with a record of success at another institution seems vital to WKU's success.

When senior faculty raise concerns about the academic direction of the institution in a faculty governance setting and are responded to with anger, what recourse do those faculty have — and does the President believe anger is an appropriate response from a Provost in that setting?

The Provost serves as the faculty's primary voice in the President's Cabinet. When faculty bring serious concerns to the Provost and those concerns are met with dismissiveness or anger rather than engagement, who in the cabinet is then responsible for ensuring faculty perspective reaches presidential decision-making? Is there a mechanism for that, and if so, what is it?

How does the President know when his Provost's account of faculty sentiment accurately reflects what faculty actually feel? What channels exist for faculty perspective to reach the President directly, and how often does he use them?

Is the President aware that some faculty believe the Provost's characterization of faculty concerns to cabinet leadership does not accurately reflect those concerns? If so, how does he evaluate competing accounts?

A Chief Academic Officer who is perceived by a significant portion of the faculty as dismissive, disrespectful, and demeaning creates a retention and recruitment problem that no salary adjustment can fully fix. Does the President agree, and has he assessed the cultural damage already done?

The President's Cabinet includes leaders for enrollment, finance, facilities, student experience, philanthropy, and athletics. There is no faculty advocate in that room except the Provost. If a faculty member has reason to believe the Provost does not accurately represent faculty concerns to cabinet leadership, what recourse exists?

You continue to promote the narrative that area leadership can give raises to those who warrant it, even citing the 172 staff who received salary adjustments this calendar year. As has been noted before, this process has been almost completely blocked for the faculty. Without merit raises, and without salary adjustments why should faculty work hard? And, don't just give us the song and dance about how you would like us to have merit...we don't and we won't. You say that each year, and then only staff and leadership get raises.

The university is in danger of losing the academic side of its mission when it does not have a true Chief Academic Officer. Bud has so many roles, and he does well in many of them, but he has abdicated the CAO role, and the cracks are showing. When he retires, hopefully soon, what will the hiring focus of his replacement be? Will we care about faculty workload and thus student learning, or will we continue the top-down push to rubber stamp degrees?

RAMP was designed to create transparency and reward academic performance. The administration of that model — including how subvention is allocated, under what conditions, and with what accountability expectations for deans — rests almost entirely with the Provost. What oversight does the President exercise over those decisions, and how are they evaluated?

I noted your recent call to double our grants work. Given we are double the R2 threshold in spite of department chairs who won't grant mandated course releases for grants, larger class sizes, less GA support, less admin support how do you expect the faculty to do this?

All of the pressures on recruitment, retention, and graduate coupled with dramatic cuts in support for faculty work are pushing us to make logical choices that undermine true academic learning. Is this the plan?

Looking forward, enrollment challenges are many, the state legislature desires to enact another cut to the state income tax, and inflation remains high. Is there ANY plan at WKU that exists to have faculty and staff salaries keep pace with inflation?

As a junior faculty, I was hired with the understanding that the new RAMP model would influence salary. Over the course of 5 years, even during years where my own research, service and/or teaching has reached “distinguished” levels, it has not been met with any salary adjustment based on the merits of my work. I don’t ask this tongue in cheek, but with genuine interest, is the model in use at the university for faculty? Please provide an example of when it has been used to improve faculty salary.

Why does the new Strategic Plan give so very little attention to improving the quality of instruction and learning at WKU?