



Monthly Meeting – September 2, 2026 (2:00 PM) DSU 2081

View Full Meeting: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MCx_ECmUppQ

Call to Order: 2:00 PM CST

Roll Call: 17 Senators in attendance; in person and via Zoom.

Approval of the Agenda & Prior Monthly Meeting Minutes: Both approved by unanimous consent.

Christopher Ware Staff Star Awards

Jolee Campell - Career Development

Brian Taylor - Application & Programming Services

Jane Tua - Communications & Marketing/Office of General Counsel

Guest Speaker

WKU President Timothy C. Caboni addressed questions and concerns submitted in advance by WKU staff. Several questions were submitted and combined during his discussion. Topics included compensation, inflation, turnover, benefits package and tuition waivers. Highlights included:

Compensation and Budget

- President Caboni discussed the university's compensation process and the role of the Budget Executive Council (BEC), which includes staff, faculty, administrators, and students. He explained that inflation, limited state funding, tuition restrictions, enrollment, and available revenue affect compensation decisions. Since January, 172 full-time staff members have received increases in addition to university-wide increases.
- Caboni reviewed WKU's budget challenges since Fall 2017, including the nearly \$40 million budget gap at that time. He credited the university community with maintaining a structurally balanced budget for the past two years without using carry-forward funds for recurring expenses. He also discussed the proposed \$7 billion state budget cut during the last legislative session, which was reversed after university presidents worked with legislators. WKU will continue advocating for higher education funding.

Staff Turnover

- Caboni stated that WKU is not experiencing a staff turnover crisis. Full-time staff turnover is approximately 8%, compared with 14% at Kentucky public institutions and 10% nationally. He noted that some turnover is healthy because it brings new ideas and energy, while excessive turnover remains a concern.

Human Resources

- Caboni thanked HR for supporting more than 2,000 employees with a staff of nine. Employees are encouraged to contact HR by phone, email, or in person. He noted that HR staff frequently work across campus and handle time-sensitive and legally sensitive matters.

Benefits and Tuition

- Caboni emphasized that total compensation includes salary, benefits, flexibility, holidays, breaks, vacation, and summer hours. He discussed the value of WKU's flexibility and employee-focused environment.
- During FY26, there were 777 requests for tuition waivers, dependent tuition discounts, and retiree tuition benefits. Caboni stated that the tuition benefit should not be considered for cuts and encouraged employees to use it for educational advancement.
- Caboni emphasized the need for stronger career ladders and opportunities for employees to advance beyond their current departments. He encouraged managers to support employees pursuing additional education and professional development using tuition waivers.

Four-Day Work Week and Summer Hours

- Caboni supports summer hours and the benefit they provide employees but does not anticipate a four-day work week year-round because university demands differ during the academic year. He stated that WKU may have been the first institution in Kentucky to implement summer hours.

Strategic Plan and Student Success

- Caboni identified the strategic plan and its metrics as key measures of university success. *Climbing to Greater Heights* is being revised through 2031.
- Since Fall 2017, the six-year graduation rate increased from 50% to 59.1%, the four-year graduation rate increased from 29% to more than 50%, and fall-to-fall retention increased from 69.9% to 79.4%. He also noted that counseling for financial aid exceeded its 90% goal.

- Caboni emphasized that enrollment is important but is not the only measure of success; retention, graduation, student progress, and student thriving are also important.

Housing and Retention

- Caboni stated that WKU has performed well in retention and its discount rate but continues to face enrollment pressures. Housing conditions have affected recruitment. Regents and Normal Halls reopened for fall but too late to impact enrollment. New buildings replacing Keen and Poland Hall are expected to open Fall 2028, followed by the Valley project.

Financial Foundation and Resource Allocation

- Caboni stated that WKU must continue strengthening its financial foundation. One-time and carry-forward funds should not be used for recurring expenses, and the university needs to build reserves. He discussed the RAMP model, which connects resource allocation to enrollment, retention, and graduation.

Decision-Making

- Caboni emphasized that decisions should align with WKU's mission, strategic plan, and long-term interests. He supports empowering employees to make decisions while holding them accountable. Approximately 90% of decisions are made by others with some input from him. He reiterated how we can disagree without making disagreements mean or hurtful.

Elevate WKU: The Southern Gateway

- Caboni used the Elevate WKU Phase 1: The Southern Gateway as an example of successful collaboration. Multiple university areas were involved in the process, allowing decisions to be made efficiently and ensuring different perspectives were considered. He credited collaboration and communication with the project's success.

Competitive Advantage and Student Experience

- Caboni identified WKU's strategic plan, personal attention, and breadth of academic and student experiences as competitive advantages. He emphasized that students should not feel like a number and that WKU's mission centers on opportunity and access.

Campus Development

- Caboni discussed facilities as important to recruitment and student experience. He referenced projects involving Gordon Ford, the Commons, Fieldhouse, press

box, Cherry Hall, Southern Gateway, academic facilities, and residence halls. Aging buildings and infrastructure require continued investment, and new facilities are important for recruitment, research, applied learning, and student living.

One-Stop Student Services

- Caboni stated that a one-stop student service model remains under consideration. The goal is to provide services where students are, potentially distributing counseling, recruitment, financial aid, and other services across campus. Accessibility will also remain a consideration.

Rumors

- Caboni stated that a parking structure at the top of the hill is not planned. He believes WKU has more of a walking issue than a parking issue and wants to preserve the view of Cherry Hall.

Campus Safety and Speeding

- Caboni discussed increased Campus Police visibility and traffic enforcement. Since February, there have been 173 traffic-control incidents at intersections and 773 additional patrols, with zero complaints through the central system about speeding. Employees were encouraged to report serious or repeated speeding directly to Campus Police.

Public Question: 3-Week Winter Break

- Caboni stated that a decision has not been made regarding the continuation of the three-week winter break. The decision will be made during the coming month or earlier, with details expected by fall break.

Public Question: Tiered and Merit-Based Raises

- Caboni discussed tiered and merit-based raises and stated that he has advocated for merit raises since arriving at WKU. He believes units should have flexibility to recognize performance and that WKU needs stronger career ladders and financial recognition for experience and increased responsibilities.

Public Question: Steps for above 2% Raise Pool

- Caboni explained that larger raises depend on recurring revenue. He discussed limitations on state funding and tuition increases and stated that if WKU received a \$5 million base-budget increase, most would go toward salaries. He continues to advocate for additional state funding and tuition flexibility.

- Caboni stated that undergraduate enrollment growth is necessary to generate additional recurring revenue. Despite financial pressures, WKU is not closing programs, firing employees, or under a hiring freeze. He stated that the university remains in a strong position compared with most institutions and will continue advocating for employees.
- Please visit https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MCx_ECmUppQ to watch the full remarks.

Officer, Committee, and Staff Regent Reports

- **Chair – Tanya Vincent:**
 - Chair Vincent will be meeting with President Caboni on Sept. 28. Please send questions if anything needs to be addressed.
- **Vice Chair – Andria Henry:**
 - No Report. She is the Faculty Senate liaison for Staff Senate and did not have anything to report.
- **Secretary – Rhonda Jones:**
 - Meeting with HR on Sept. 8 to discuss onboarding opportunities to potentially partner with Staff Senate.
- **Parliamentarian – Tracy Bryant:** Absent
- **Technology – Kent Johnson:** No Report
- **Treasurer – Amanda Hardin**

AS OF 9/1/2026, FY27:

E&G Index – 100600

- Starting Balance = \$3,700.00
- Additions = \$0.00
- Disbursements = \$0.00
- Ending Balance = \$3,700.00

WKUF Account (Staff Senate Excellence Fund) – 1108600

- Starting Balance = \$2,275.12
- Additions = \$0.00
- Disbursements = \$0.00
- Ending Balance = \$2,275.12

CHF Account (Book Scholarship) – 800139

- Starting Balance = \$1,969.84
- Additions = \$0.00
- Disbursements = \$0.00
- Ending Balance = \$1,969.84

- **Communications – Deanna Jenkins:** Absent
- **Staff Regent – Jennifer Hammonds:** No Report.

- Regent Hammonds encouraged staff to reach out if they are interested in pursuing a bachelor's or master's degree. She would be happy to have a conversation and assist with exploring options.
- **SGA:** SGA Student Body President Caden Lucas thanked everyone for welcoming students back during Master Plan and the work we all do for our students.
- **EVP SOF:** No longer in attendance.

Old Business:

- Staff Senate Meet and Greet: Chair Vincent did secure a date and has invited Provost Fischer and President Caboni.
- The Staff Senate Survey will be distributed this month without changes to the current questions to ensure results are received in a timely manner. Chair Vincent suggested forming a committee to review the survey questions and recommend changes as needed for future surveys.
- Staff Ombudsperson position is still open. Approval was given to offer a stipend for the position. The position will close on September 11, 2026.

New Business:

- Senator Werner: Made a motion to create a WKU Emergency Assistance Fund. Motion was unanimously approved. Discussion was made about creating a committee. Staff Senate Chair Tanya Vincent will need to work as a liaison with the College Heights Foundation to get this moving forward.

Public Comment: Senator Werner spoke on behalf of another staff member:

A staff member raised concern about the quality of the university's toilet paper. While it may seem like a minor issue, it was used as an example of why employees should feel comfortable speaking up about workplace concerns, both large and small. Small problems can sometimes be the easiest to address, but they cannot be addressed if employees do not voice their concerns.

The discussion emphasized that open and honest communication is important to creating a better workplace. Employees should not have to wait for an issue to become a crisis before speaking up, and listening to minor concerns helps build trust and encourages employees to raise more significant issues.

Announcements & Notable Events: Staff Senate Meet and Greet on October 22, 2026, in DSU-Nite Class at 10:00 AM.

Adjournment: 3:20 PM CST