Ransdell announces retirement

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When Gary Ransdell announced his retirement last week it caught everyone by surprise. But it’s something he had been planning for quite some time.

Amy Bingham sits down with the university’s ninth president to talk about his decision, as well as the remainder of his time at WKU in this week’s View from the Hill.

President Ransdell says he and his wife Julie began to talk about retiring before his contract was up in 2022 nearly ten months ago. Over the holidays they decided to make the announcement at the January Board of Regents meeting to make sure there was plenty of time to find his replacement.

“I’ve got a long list of things we need to get done over the next year and a half as well.”

President Ransdell is going full steam ahead for the remaining seventeen months he’s at the helm of Western Kentucky University.

“Like I said to faculty and staff, we’re going to pick up the pace, we’re going to redouble our efforts and I can take a nap in July of 2017. Until then, we’re getting after it.”

Getting after it will mean dealing with substantial cuts. Governor Bevin’s state budget address, which included a serious cut in funding for higher education, ironically came just four days before Ransdell’s retirement announcement.

“I began thinking this timing may be fortuitous because I can deal with it in a little different context and make difficult decisions without fear of job security or worry about how am I going to be perceived in making this decision.”(WKU beauty shots)

While unable to specify what the cuts will be, Ransdell describes them as programmatic in nature and says they are planning eight to ten specific actions to meet financial targets.

“We will go on and make the best decisions we can sooner rather than later. We will probably quell our communication with campus until we know what the final state budget will be.”

As much as Dr. Ransdell has worked at this job 24/7 since 1997, so has his wife Julie.

So losing him means losing her as well.

19:02 “For twenty years she will have worked her heart out at my job. So I think she’s ready for this as well. She’s been a terrific hostess and servant of this university for a long time.”

While the couple plans to remain in Bowling Green, they are looking forward to more Florida in their future as both sons and two grandchildren currently live in the sunshine state. But as for serving in another capacity on campus, Dr. Ransdall says no way.

“One thing for sure, I have not asked for an office on campus. I do not intend to have a university position. I’m not gonna be hanging around. My successor does not have to worry about me looking over his or her shoulder. That wouldn’t be right.”

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The Ransdells plan to move out of the president’s home in January to allow plenty of time for improvements before the next occupant moves in. But they plan to remain in Bowling Green and attend as many university functions as possible. He will begin a sabbatical on June 30, 2017 and officially retire December 31st of that year.

With this week’s View from the Hill. I’m Amy Bingham.