Gary Ransdell’s new job

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As Gary Ransdell wraps up his final days as president of Western Kentucky University, he’s also preparing to set sail on a whole new academic adventure.

Amy Bingham talks to him about his next role as President and CEO of Semester at Sea in this week’s View from the Hill.

Imagine the whole world being your classroom. That’s what 600 students from all over the country experience when they board a cruise ship that literally sails around the world.

 “When students finish a voyage they’re lives are changed. Their lives are changed forever.”

Beginning in January, Gary Ransdell will be the person in charge of this life changing opportunity known as Semester at Sea.

 “My responsibility is making sure we’re recruiting new faculty, new student body, the ship is full, the business plan is working, books are balanced.”

Ransdell has sailed on the ship once before, to get an idea what WKU students experience on the voyage.

 “I guess I asked so many questions that two months later I was invited to come on to the Board of Trustees for the program.”

Fast forward a few years and Ransdell is now poised to take over as President. He’s got even more questions when he sails on the ship for ten days in September.

 “I want to learn terminology, I want to learn ship stuff, I want to know how the gallery works, how the engine room works. I want to know what the captain’s routine normally is.”

Although they are keeping their home in Bowling Green, the Ransdell’s will be based in Fort Collins Colorado, the home of Semester at Sea’s partner university, Colorado State.

 “Julie’s gonna be back and forth a lot. She’ll be there a lot but our grandchildren are in Florida so you better believe she’ll be there a lot.”

He says a big priority will be building an endowment for Semester at Sea.

 “I’ll be travelling a lot and raising money. We have about 65,000 alumni but they also alumni of a given university so it’s not like there just your alumni.”

But it’s the Ransdell’s alma mater they are eager to get back to when he completes his five year contract.

 “In five years when we come back it will be Gary and Julie who? And we can just be fans and volunteers and do things with the Alumni Association and the community.”

Gary Ransdell’s last day as WKU President is June 30th. Dr. Tim Caboni takes over the role on July first. Gary and Julie Ransdell will be inducted into WKU’s Hall of Distinguished Alumni on October 13th.

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

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