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WKU rescues effort to preserve history

By Rebekah Alvey Lexington Herald-Leader Jun 15, 2019

When staff members for Kentucky Archaeological Survey found out the University of Kentucky was cutting the program in March, they thought their jobs were lost.

However, Western Kentucky University announced Thursday that it will provide KAS with a new home where the agency can serve the state, according to a WKU press release.

KAS tries to protect archaeological sites by working with teachers, students, landowners, communities and government agencies, WKU said. KAS also educates the public about Kentucky's archaeological background.

A few of KSA's partners include The Capitol City Museum, Shelby County Historical Society and other nonprofit organizations, according to WKU. KAS also works with the Kentucky Heritage Council and has previously opened up archaeological digs to younger students.

KAS was recognized nationally for its Davis Bottom History Preservation project in a historically black neighborhood in Lexington.

KSA began in 1995 and is self-funded, according to WKU. Staff salaries, student assistants and educational products will be supported by state and federal funding, agreements with nonprofit organizations, fee-for-service contracts and private contributions.

The 10-year partnership with WKU started June 1, WKU said. The move will occur over the summer, said WKU spokesman Bob Skipper.

Eric Schlarb, a KAS staff archaeologist since 1997, said in a release he was shocked when UK decided it would no longer host the agency. However, he said he was reassured with the WKU deal.

"The opportunity to come to Western really makes a huge difference," Schlarb said in the release. "It enables us to continue to do the work we've been building the last twenty years."

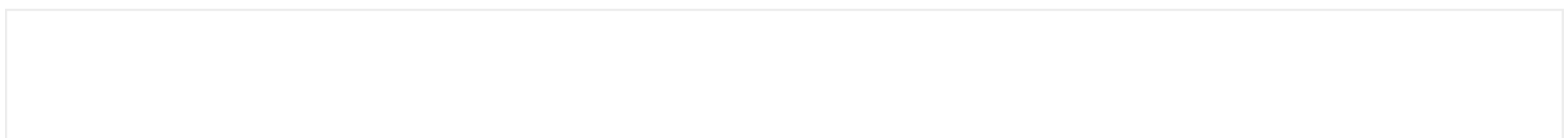
Darlene Applegate, archaeologist and head of WKU's Department of Folk Studies and Anthropology, said in a news release that she was excited about the opportunities KAS provides for the university.

Applegate said WKU can possibly raise its profile and recruit more students in the program because of the new offerings. She said she anticipates WKU becoming a focal point for public archaeology in Kentucky.

The KAS lab will be located in Cherry Hall on the WKU campus but the lab's work will primarily be done off campus at project or outreach sites, WKU said. KSA was originally housed in the UK College of Arts and Sciences in Lexington.

When UK first announced it would be cutting KAS, it said the resources previously designated for KAS would be used to add two new faculty members to the archaeology department. KAS employees and members of the archaeology community expressed their shock and disapproval with the cuts. Some UK anthropology alumni wrote a letter to the Herald-Leader opposing the decision.

Video and Slideshows



0:36

KSP jail incident

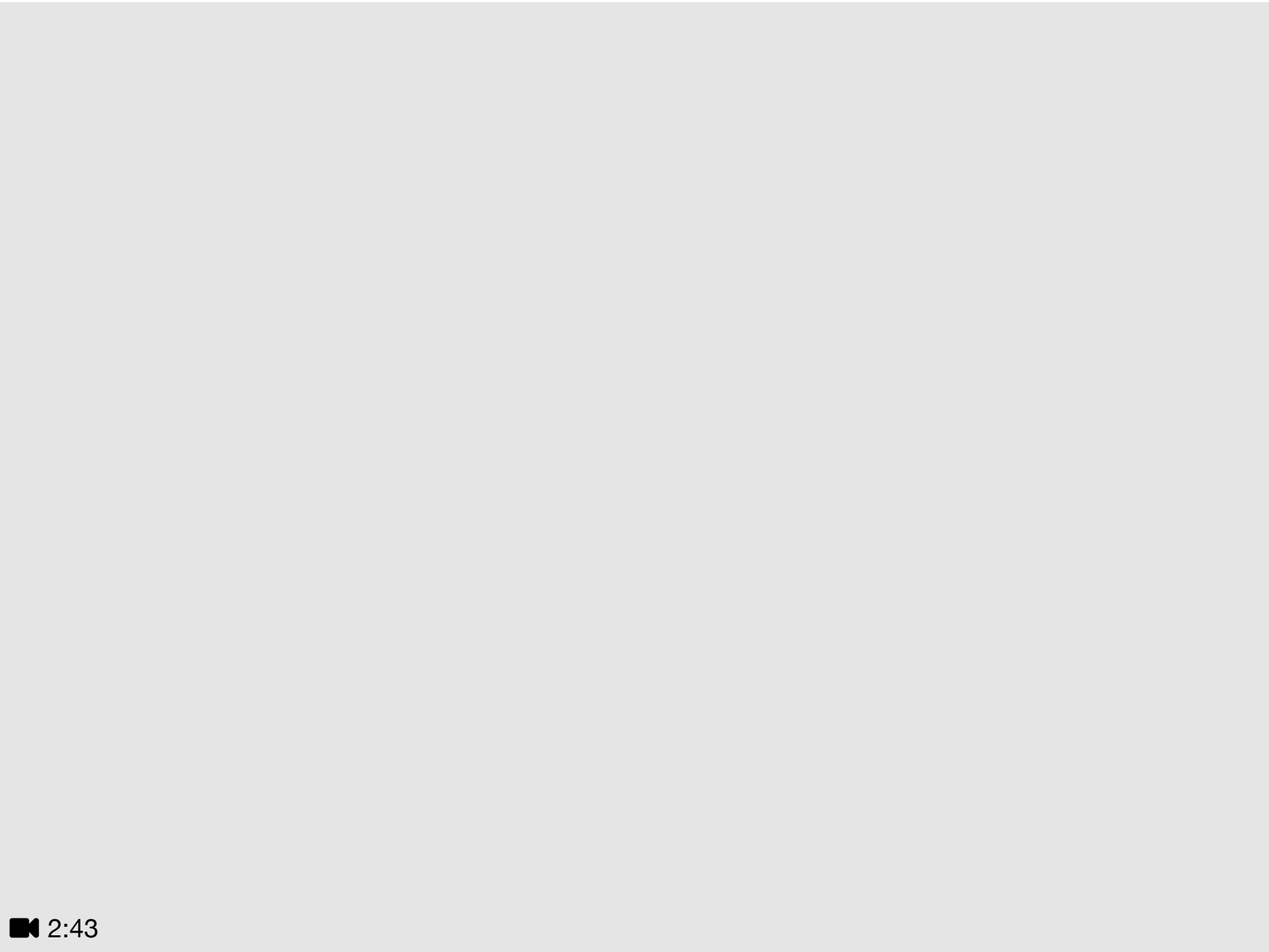
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OPD lip sync challenge



 +2

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2:43

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