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# WKU's 2023 budget kicks major projects into gear

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## WKU's 2023 budget vs 2022

How WKU's 2023 budget compares to the previous year in various key areas. The budget was approved last Friday by the university's Board of Regents.

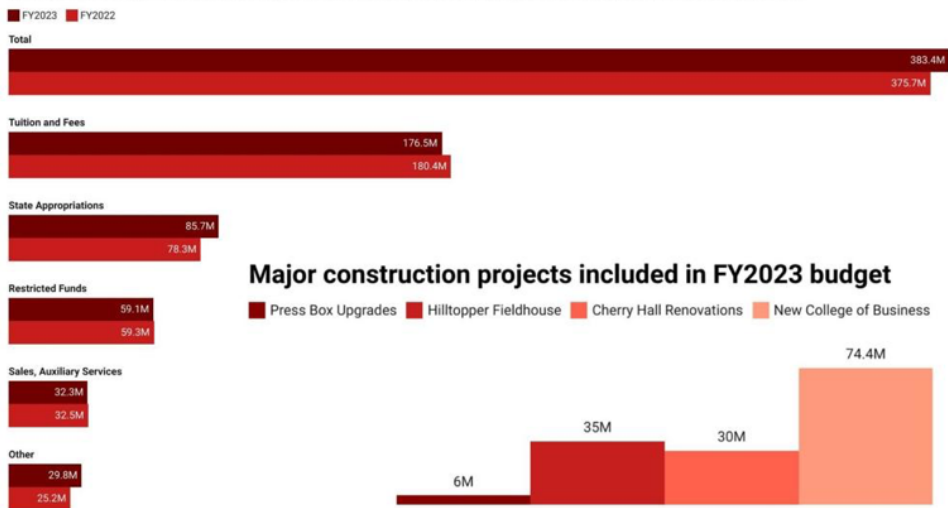


Chart: Jake Moore, Bowling Green Daily News • Source: WKU Finance and Budget Committee • Created with Datarapper

Western Kentucky University’s Board of Regents approved the university’s budget for the 2023 fiscal year on Friday, paving the way for a handful of major construction projects and overhauls to its ever-changing campus.

The approved budget sits at \$383.4 million, up by about \$8 million from the previous year. In order to combat rising costs of living and to provide performance-based awards, it also includes a 2% salary pool increase for employees.

Jace Lux, the university’s media spokesperson, said WKU’s Budget Executive Committee will monitor the effects of inflation and assess ways to help offset rising

costs.

“WKU’s Budget Executive Committee continues to monitor inflation, and will work to creatively minimize the effects of inflation on university employees,” Lux said in an email. “In addition to utilizing any available salary pool funds, divisional leaders will continue to work within existing budgets to address compensation challenges.”

The largest chunk of revenue comes from tuition and fees. Undergraduate resident students will see a 1.19%, or \$60, increase in tuition, bringing the semester total to \$5,556.

This year’s budget sets four major projects into motion, two for academic purposes and two for athletic use.

WKU’s iconic Cherry Hall will receive a facelift in the form of a \$30 million renovation and restoration effort. The process will be a multi-year undertaking that will address infrastructure issues inside and out of the building.

Lux said the first order of business is to conduct feasibility studies “to enable preservation planning.”

After this, air duct cleaning, alarm system replacement and lighting improvements will make up some of the “behind-the-scenes” updates to the structure.

“But rest assured that there will be very visible enhancements that will honor the building’s history but also provide a state of the art facility in which our campus

community can gather together and learn from one another,” Lux said in the email.



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The green space where Tate Page Hall once stood will not be permanent. Included in Kentucky’s biennial budget is \$74.4 million to construct a new, 144,000 square foot Gordon Ford College of Business building. The current goal is to open the facility in the fall of 2025.

This helps to illustrate the increased support WKU is receiving from the commonwealth. State appropriations make up 22%, or \$85.7 million, of the FY2023 budget, an increase of 9% over the previous year.

“We cannot overstate the importance of state funding for higher education,” Lux said. “State appropriations are vital to WKU because they enable us to provide the experience that students have come to expect. Most practically, state support allows the university to keep tuition increases at a minimum, thereby increasing access to WKU.

The more support we receive from the state, the more accessible the WKU experience becomes, and the more enhanced the WKU experience is for our students.”

The largest news for WKU Athletics was the approval of the Hilltopper Fieldhouse, a massive indoor sports facility to house practice areas for all of WKU’s athletic programs, as well a permanent place for the Big Red Marching Band and champion forensics team to practice.

Organizations like WKU’s esports team will also be able to use the space, as well as students taking part in intramural sports.

The structure itself has not seen any architectural planning or design at this point. The price tag on the project is expected to be between \$32 and \$35 million.

The Houchens-Smith Stadium press box will finally receive renovations. Built in 1968, it lacks proper ADA accessibility heating and cooling and visitors have to navigate the stands to enter. The improvements come in between \$4 and \$6 million.

Construction on the press box is expected to begin following the 2023 football season and wrap up by summer of 2024, and ground is expected to be broken on the fieldhouse in the summer of 2023.