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WKU to offer high schoolers early college experience in Glasgow

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WKU President Timothy Caboni speaks at the event celebrating the 20th anniversary of the WKU Glasgow campus on Thursday.

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GLASGOW – On the 20th anniversary of its Glasgow campus, WKU not only looked back at the past, but also toward the future.

At the celebration, President Timothy Caboni announced the fall 2023 launch of Early College at WKU, a new program that will allow high school juniors and seniors from seven regional school districts to earn a year's worth of WKU college credit before their high school graduations.

The program, which will be housed at WKU's Glasgow campus at 500 Hilltopper Way, is intended to "revitalize" the campus by providing greater access and opportunity to regional high school students who might not have otherwise chosen to pursue higher education.

Caboni said data shows that nearly half of the students from the seven high schools closest to the WKU Glasgow campus are choosing not to attend college anywhere, with many citing financial concerns as their primary reason.

"The Hilltopper Guarantee presents an extraordinary opportunity for young people to continue their education, and while overcoming financial challenges provides more access to the WKU experience, we must continue opening even more doors," Caboni said.

Early College at WKU will be available to 100 juniors at high schools in Monroe, Metcalfe, Barren, Hart and Allen counties and those in the Caverna and Glasgow school districts beginning in fall 2023.

The following year, a new class will increase total program enrollment to 200 high school students.

Students will spend half-days at the WKU Glasgow campus before returning to their high schools.

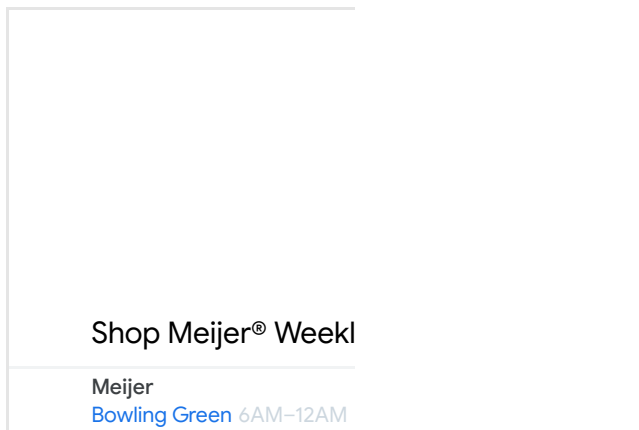
During the two-year program, students will take classes alongside WKU college students, earning 15 credit hours each year in general education courses like biology and English in addition to profession-specific classes in one of five areas – nursing, education, crime and legal studies, agriculture and business management.

These five areas were chosen because they directly connect to a need in the community, Caboni said.

Student will also go on two field trips a semester – one to visit onsite professionals in their chosen area of study and another to WKU’s main campus to engage with professors and students.

The early college program will maximize Kentucky’s Dual Credit and Work Ready Scholarships, with the majority of courses being covered by scholarship, said Derick Strode, WKU director of regional campuses.





Caboni said that he thinks this program will increase the percentage of high school students who go to college by “raising their aspirations.”

“We need to demonstrate to them that college is within their reach, that it is affordable, that they can do the work and they can be successful for all four years,” Caboni said. “Starting earlier with that conversation will hopefully increase the percentage who see WKU in their future and as a possibility.”

The program is also aimed to demonstrate WKU’s commitment to its Glasgow regional campus, which has experienced an enrollment decline in the past decade.

The campus was established in 2002 with an enrollment of approximately 1,500 students and increased until fall 2010’s peak enrollment of 2,747 students, said Kristen Bale, former Board of Regents chair.

“However, over the last decade, a number of challenges with post-secondary education has led to a decrease in enrollment here and nationwide,” Bale said.

These challenges include an economy that has made affording higher education more difficult and new technology that has increased non-traditional competition to brick-and-mortar universities, said Phillip Bale, WKU Board of Regents chair.

Still, higher education is more critical than ever, Phillip Bale said.

“We’ve gone from (an) economy that depended on physical labor to one that depends on your brain power,” he said. “Education is the engine that is driving the global digital knowledge economy, and it’s an economy that demands the highest educated workforce in history.”

Caboni said that while education is no longer an exclusively brick-and-mortar world, the early college program will be able to leverage in-person learning and engagement to deepen relationships and create opportunities that might not have otherwise existed.

“We are not only offering students in this area a head start,” he said. “We’re providing them the right start.”

Parent night information sessions about the program will be held in each of the seven school districts in November and December.

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