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WKU approves Plona contract, general counsel raise

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Hank Plona (center) is given an honorary jersey with his name on it beside WKU President Dr. Timothy Caboni (left) and Athletic Director Todd Stewart (right) during a press conference to announce him as the university's new men's head basketball coach in E.A. Diddle Arena on Wednesday.

PHOTOS BY Grace Ramey / grace.ramey@bgdailynews.com

It is final — Hank Plona is Western Kentucky University's 17th men's basketball coach.

WKU's Board of Regents approved Plona's contract promising a \$500,000 salary with performance bonuses during a quarterly meeting on Thursday.

Plona's short career at WKU so far began last year when he was hired as assistant head coach by his predecessor, Steve Lutz. He came to WKU from Indian Hills Community College in Iowa after an eight-year stint as head coach.



He is now at the helm after Lutz led the team to a Conference USA Tournament championship this year and to its first trip to the NCAA tournament since their 2012-13 season. Lutz was hired away by Oklahoma State.

WKU President Timothy Caboni told the Daily News it was "really important to us to maintain continuity in that coaching position" when deciding Lutz's replacement.

"You learn things as you go through that process about candidates, and it became clear that Hank played a really important role in the success of the team in the past year, number one," Caboni said. "He's had terrific success at Indian Hills Community College in Iowa, where he

competed for and won national championships, and lastly, we didn't want to have a third new basketball coach in three years with a new system."

Caboni said Plona also demonstrated a dedication to both athletic and academic success among players.

"We have expectations around winning championships, but we also have the expectation that our young people will study, go to class get degrees and have wonderful careers after WKU," Caboni said.

Regents also approved a \$33,688 raise for WKU's general counsel Andrea Anderson. A new employment contract will increase Anderson's salary from \$186,312 to \$220,000 until it expires in 2028.

Caboni said the salary still falls below what the University of Louisville, University of Kentucky, Eastern Kentucky University and Northern Kentucky University pay for the position. In addition, he said, Anderson has played a "crucial, strategic role" in her position.

"She's saved us multiple million dollars in judgments that could have been levied against us and has been an important strategic voice on campus for a Title IX as well," Caboni said. "It's a well deserved and well earned commitment to her."

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