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WKU president gets 'outstanding' performance review; contract negotiations move ahead

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Jan 22, 2021



Western Kentucky University President Timothy Caboni and his wife, Kacy Caboni, stand on campus.

WKU

Western Kentucky University's Board of Regents gave WKU President Timothy Caboni a glowing evaluation Friday, which will likely bode well for Caboni as he nears the end of his four-year contract June 30.

When the group met in committees Friday, board Chairman Frederick Higdon lauded Caboni's "outstanding" performance, and he was joined by a chorus of praise from the other regents.

"He is truly a visionary in his leadership at our university," Higdon said.

"From a recruitment standpoint, in the fall of 2020, WKU saw the largest one-year increase in the size of its freshman class at any time during the

past three decades,” Higdon said, appearing to read from the evaluation. “Those students also brought the highest high school GPA in WKU history.

“Turning to retention, the WKU 2019-20 one-year retention rates are the highest they have ever been. In just three years – the academic year 2017 through the academic year 2020 – WKU’s first-to-second-year student retention increased 6.9 percentage points,” Higdon said.



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The university’s retention rate for under-represented minorities – a vital metric for WKU as traditional college-going students dwindle and campus bodies diversify – also jumped sharply by 15.2 percentage points, Higdon said.

More students are graduating, as measured by an increase in the university's six-year graduation rate.

In the school year, Higdon said, “WKU achieved the highest (under-represented minority) and low-income six-year graduation rates in eight years, and it awarded more than 3,000 bachelor's degrees – more than the institution has awarded in any previous academic year.”

Higdon also praised Caboni's efforts to boost “access and opportunity” for students, including doubling the number of freshmen receiving scholarships compared to the fall of 2019.



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“Since its inception in 2017, the WKU Opportunity Fund – a fundraising effort to support our students – has already grown \$48 million of its \$50 million target, with 136 new endowed scholarship funds,” Higdon said.

Of the accolades, Caboni said: “All of what you heard today is due to the work, tremendous work, of our faculty and staff. I want to extend my appreciation to the entire university community – our alumni, our supporters, our donors – for everything they’ve done to enable the work and the success to occur that we’ve experienced in the past 31/2 years and that existed before I was here. ... I want to thank Kacy (Caboni) for her remarkable work on the Opportunity Fund and all of our development staff.”

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Caboni's initial four-year term as WKU president is set to expire June 30. His contract provides that "the term of this contract shall be extended by one additional year at the end of each year of this four-year agreement, providing for a continuous term of four years for each of the years in the initial term of this agreement."

Going forward, Higdon said the board will "transition into the duty and the need to discuss with the president his next contract. That documentation will be coming out to the board in the next few days."

"The executive committee will spearhead the work of getting a contract in place to present for discussion to the full board," Higdon

said, adding he'd like to have the work completed by the board's meeting in March.

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