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Famed oceanographer to speak at WKU

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Robert Ballard will be the first speaker in the WKU Presidential Speaker Series on Oct. 10.

Submitted

Oceanographer Robert Ballard has been around the world and to the depths of the sea. Now, he's coming to Bowling Green.

Ballard, most famous for discovering the wreckage of the RMS Titanic, will travel to Western Kentucky University in October to deliver his keynote address, "Deep Sea Exploration: Past, Present, and Future" – an exploration of his storied career, as the first speaker in the WKU Presidential Speaker Series.

“We are thrilled to kick off the series with a true visionary and trailblazer,” WKU President Tim Caboni stated in a news release. “This series reflects our commitment to fostering intellectual curiosity, innovation and lifelong learning.



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“Dr. Ballard’s insights will not only inspire our students, faculty and staff but will also resonate with a broad audience eager to explore the unknown.”

His presentation will begin at 7 p.m. Oct. 10 in WKU’s Van Meter Auditorium. Doors will open at 6:15 p.m.

Limited seating is offered on a first-come, first-served basis and photography is prohibited.

Ballard oversees work done on the Nautilus research ship, which uses four remotely operated underwater vehicles to explore historic wreckage sites.

“I grew up wanting to be Captain Nemo from ‘20,000 Leagues Under the Sea,’ ” he stated in the release. “I’m honored to be the first speaker in the WKU Presidential Speaker Series, and I look forward to sharing stories of my explorations with the university and Bowling Green community as we dive into the mysteries of the ocean together.”

Ballard founded the Ocean Exploration Trust in 2008 to further his work.

A recent expedition surveyed a Japanese aircraft carrier sunk during the Battle of Midway during World War II. Most expeditions are streamed live for free at www.NautilusLive.org.

Ballard is also known for discovering the German battleship Bismarck and the aircraft carrier USS Yorktown. He also located the wreck of John F. Kennedy’s PT-109 and found the first hydrothermal vents in the Galapagos Rift in 1977.

Ballard’s autobiography “Into the Deep” released in 2021 and a National Geographic television special, “Bob Ballard: An Explorer’s Life,” is currently available on Disney+.

The event is the first in WKU’s new Presidential Speaker Series which aims to complement student learning by inviting influential guests to speak about a variety of industries, from public policy to science to art.

“As part of our responsibility to provide a comprehensive experience that extends beyond the classroom, the Presidential Speaker Series will cover a wide range of topics spanning multiple disciplines,” Caboni stated. “I hope that this series will contribute to thought-provoking dialogue on campus and intellectual growth in our community.”

Jace Lux, WKU director of media relations, said Ballard was selected because the university wanted to start the series “off with a bang.”

“He’s really an individual that’s lived an inspiring life,” Lux said. “I think that’s a lot of what this Presidential Speaker Series will hopefully do – inspire conversation.”

Lux said the next speaker in the series is undecided but will likely be invited after this semester.

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