



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

October 20, 2023

PROVOST EMERITUS APPOINTMENT

REQUEST:

Approval of Provost Emeritus status for Dr. David Lee.

FACT:

David D. Lee has served Western Kentucky University with distinction for forty-eight remarkable years. After completing his Ph.D. at The Ohio State University, Dr. Lee began teaching in the WKU Department of History as a Visiting Assistant Professor in August 1975. He made his way up the ranks from assistant professor to tenured associate professor in 1980 and to full professor in 1985. A respected teacher and accomplished scholar, Professor Lee published two well-regarded books: *Tennessee in Turmoil: Politics in the Volunteer State, 1920-1932* (Memphis State UP, 1979) and *Sergeant York: An American Hero*, (UP of Kentucky, 1985, paperback 2002, e-book 2012). Dr. Lee's research on the Hoover administration and aviation history was supported by grants from National Endowment for Humanities, The Herbert Hoover Presidential Library Association, and the Smithsonian Institution.

Professor Lee began a career of administrative service to WKU as Associate Dean of Potter College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences from 1986-1992 and served as Interim Head of Music from 1987-1989. He was named Interim Dean of Potter College from 1992-1994, and Dean of Potter College of Arts & Letters from 1994-2015. Dean Lee served Potter College in the dean's office for an unprecedented twenty-nine years. Among his accomplishments are leadership in the creation of The Cultural Enhancement Series which brought internationally distinguished thinkers, scholars, and artists to campus; oversight in the consolidation of journalism and broadcasting programs into a nationally renowned School of Journalism and Broadcasting; advocacy for establishing the Strings program in the Music Department; extensive support in the development of the film major, the foundation for WKU's current BFA in Film; and guidance in the establishment of the Master of Arts in Creative Writing degree, Potter College's first terminal degree.

Dean Lee served the broader institution in a number of other important ways: he oversaw an \$18.5 million dollar project to construct a facility to house the School of Journalism and Technology and the university's Information Technology Division (1998-2003); led the General Education Review Committee to recommend significant changes in general education, securing the unanimous approval of the University Senate (1998-2001); presided over the WKU Centennial Committee charged with planning the university's 100-year celebration (2003-07); and chaired five search committees for deans of all other academic colleges (twice for Ogden College).

Dean Lee was elevated to the role of Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs in August 2015. As Provost, Lee delivered wise counsel to both President Ransdell and President Caboni, helped shepherd the university through the transition between presidents, and, in his final year as Provost, provided strong, steady, and humane leadership during a challenging period of reorganization and budget reallocation.

In August Provost Lee entered transitional retirement and was appointed as WKU's first University Historian. Among his projects has been important work chronicling WKU's acquisition of the Jonesville

neighborhood through the Urban Renewal Project in the 1960s, a project that has helped inform WKU's recent efforts toward reconciliation and to honor Jonesville families and descendants. Over the last five years, Dr. Lee has conducted research to write an updated history of WKU, a work that combines his commitment to WKU as an institution and his vocation as a historian.

Named winner of the Potter College Excellence Award (1981), President's Spirit of Western Award (2006), and Honorary WKU Alumnus (2023), Provost Lee has been lauded for his many contributions to WKU. Even more notable than the long list of awards is the character, the spirit, that David Lee has brought to his work, whether in daily, routine tasks, or longer-term, more consequential projects. Humility, humanity, gentility, attentiveness, intelligence, kindness, and creativity are just a few of the traits that David has consistently brought to his work and that have made him, frankly, one of the most notable figures at WKU in the last half-century.

Dr. Lee fully retired from the university on June 30, 2023. President Caboni recommends the Board of Regents approve the designation of "Provost Emeritus" for Dr. Lee based upon his forty-eight years of service and his record of achievement at the university.

RECOMMENDATION:

President Timothy C. Caboni recommends that Provost Emeritus status be awarded to Dr. David Lee.

MOTION:

Approval of Provost Emeritus status for Dr. David Lee.