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## WKU to host 31st MASTER Plan

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WKU's 2021 MASTER Plan members dance on South Lawn during a glow party after the MASTER Plan convocation at Houchens-Smith Stadium.

Daily News File

Western Kentucky University expects some 2,100 students to participate in this year's MASTER Plan, WKU's six-day program for incoming students, according to Ginny Hensley, one of the program's two co-coordinators.

That's a slight increase in participation compared to the last three years' program and about where participation was expected to be, Hensley said.

First launched in 1993, the roughly weeklong MASTER Plan kicks off Monday, launching a series of events over six days to acclimate first-year and transfer students to WKU. The program costs a student \$135, which covers activities and meals, and allows students who live on campus to move in a week early.

For first-year participants, there's a 7.1% increase in progression to the next grade compared to incoming students who don't participate, according to the WKU website. The website adds that the average on-time graduate rate increases 10.1% for participants.

Throughout the program, during the day, some 75 WKU faculty and community members will take 25 to 30 students each to cover a variety of topics, such as the functionality of student IDs, students' dining plan and finances. Some newer topics, such as artificial intelligence, will also be covered in these sessions, Hensley said.

The evenings will have plenty of optional social activities, such as an LGBTQIA+ social; a social at the WKU Planetarium; a social about campus resources for Black, Indigenous and students of color; and many others.

"It takes a lot of people to pull it off," Hensley said of the program.

In addition to traditions such as the ceremonial Topper Walk, there are some new evening events and updates.

This will be the first year students will use the app “Guidebook” for their personalized schedule instead of the usual paper program. Anyone without a device to access the app can rent one from WKU, an option that will be covered during the first day, Hensley said.

Additions include glow golf as well as rides on the Bowling Green Trolley, where students will traverse historic streets and downtown. Hensley said that WKU has added more chill events such as coffee hour and coloring.

Notably, the annual scavenger hunt of the last three years has been named after the late J. Lee Robertson.

Known as “Mr. Western,” Robertson, who passed at the age of 102 last month, was a World War II veteran who served the WKU community for 77 years. Over the last three years, students would engage in a scavenger hunt called the Amazing Race, with one stop at the Guthrie Bell Tower, a tribute to veterans; there, Robertson would wait to impart “60 seconds of wisdom” and take a picture with students, Hensley said.

“The race will still have a little piece of him,” Hensley said.

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**David Horowitz**