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## WKU governing body gets two new regents

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JENNIFER HAMMONDS

Clinton Lewis

A Jamestown attorney and a Western Kentucky University administrator have been selected to join WKU's governing body, the university Board of Regents.

Among the 11 regents, eight are appointed by the governor, and three – a faculty regent, staff regent and student regent – are elected by their peers.

Gov. Andy Beshear appointed Russell County attorney and WKU graduate Derrick Helm to replace the previous regent, Linda Ball. His term runs through June 2023.

WKU staffers – the university’s non-faculty employees – elected Jennifer Hammonds, the university registrar and executive director for Graduate Studies, to replace the previous staff regent, David Brinkley. Her term goes through June 2027.

“I am excited to collaborate with our two new regents as we advance initiatives to grow our enrollment, enhance our research portfolio and build on WKU’s recent successes,” WKU President Timothy Caboni said in a statement. “Derrick’s dedication to his alma mater is a tremendous asset to the Board of Regents, while Jennifer’s optimism and transparent, thoughtful decision-making are equally invaluable.”

## Helm, returning to WKU

Helm said he doesn’t have an agenda – but if he had to have a focus, it would be to represent students and families from the eastern region of southcentral Kentucky.

“A lot of us have gone to school at Western, and we never really had much of a voice or representation on the board,” he said. “I’m hoping to bring that from my area over here.”

Helm said he looks forward to “learning a lot,” getting up to date on WKU and getting to know the students, faculty, staff and administration.

“It’s been about 20 years since I was on The Hill on a full-time basis,” Helm said. “I look forward to seeing how a lot of things have changed, how they’ve progressed and

gotten better.”

Helm said his interest in joining the board came from his education at WKU and his ongoing term on the Board of Directors for the Kentucky Lottery Corporation, which allocates all net profits toward college scholarships and education across the commonwealth.

An attorney of the Jamestown-based Helm Shearer Wilson law firm, Helm graduated from WKU in 2006 and the Salmon P. Chase College of Law in 2009. In addition to serving on the Kentucky Lottery Corporation Board of Directors, he’s general counsel at the Lake Cumberland Area Development District and the Lake Cumberland Community Action Agency.

“I told (the governor) I’d be honored ... I was excited for the opportunity to be involved, get to help out, and bring a voice from my area to the area and Board of Regents,” he said. “I will be accessible to any person – student faculty or staff – who wants to talk to me about any issue at WKU.”

## Hammonds, representing staff

Hammonds said her roles at WKU have allowed her to meet staff from many positions across campus – giving her insight into college processes, the ways employees work together and the avenues through which she can support and advocate for different staff members as a regent.

After a colleague nominated her to be staff regent, Hammonds partook in a Q&A alongside two other candidates. Staffers college wide submitted questions to the Staff Senate, and after the candidates answered, a vote followed.

“It’s very humbling,” she said of her election. “Also, the expectation to represent staff and to be sure you advocate for everyone is a tremendous responsibility.”

Hammonds said she aims to advocate for staff interests, practice good stewardship of university resources and support compensation and advancement, particularly for staff members.

Hammonds became the WKU university registrar in 2019 after working at Shawnee State University in Ohio for 15 years, where she held roles as academic adviser, associate registrar and university registrar. She became interim director of Graduate Studies last October and took the position permanently this month.