

Chair's Report
Faculty Senate
April 28, 2025

• **The Colonnade Working Group:**

Stacey Forsythe, chair, said the working group plans to have draft recommendations to CAD in August. From there, feedback will be solicited in various modalities from key departments and the campus community.

By the end of the Fall 2025 semester, the goal is to move a plan forward through the proper curriculum process: Colonnade Committee, UCC, SEC and Senate.

As stated previously, the goal is to streamline the program to benefit students, she said.

• **House Bill 4:**

Quite a bit of email traffic has crossed my path regarding an interim report sent in September 2024 to the Kentucky State Legislature in conjunction with House Bill 4 (the “DEI” bill). Concerns were raised about:

- Faculty Syllabi being sent by WKU as part of the report.
- Faculty names attached to compensation received.
- Social media post screenshots.

I spoke with President Caboni about this during our monthly meeting on April 28. He stated that:

- all the information sent is a matter of public record. I agree it is.
- the university sent what was requested, and that the information sent was a blend of information requested by legislators and from Freedom of Information requests.

I agree that the information is all public record. I expressed concern that the information could be used by non-governmental agencies such as Turning Point and its accompanying website that identifies by campus “left leaning” faculty to target WKU professors:

<https://www.professorwatchlist.org/>

I don't think this is an unreasonable concern given that these organizations know that scouring legislative websites in states where Anti-DEI legislation has passed will offer them targets.

The president said that his “bright lines” are freedom of speech and academic freedom, and that he doesn't think lawmakers will “go there.” The final version of HB 4 was an indication that they will not, he said.

That said, all the information is public record. I speak in my law class about the “Mosaic Theory” as it applies to public information. When information is scattered about and in bits and pieces it is harmless (thousands of tiny pieces of tile). But does the nature of that information change when it is all put in one place (the completed mosaic). Does it the information change in nature and become harmful? I hope not for the WKU faculty's sake.

I also contacted Jennifer Smith, WKU Legislative Liaison, about the concerns raised about the Sept. 17, 2024, report: <https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/CommitteeDocuments/28/>

She offered this in an email response to my email:

“Thank you for contacting me regarding the report WKU was required to submit. Everything in the report was a requirement. I do want to clarify that we only included the names, titles and salaries of a few people, based on the requested information from the committee. I have attached the questions each university received so that you can see what was asked for.”

I have attached the file containing the questions to this report.

The president offered these thoughts about the 2025-2026 academic year:

- A tough budget year?: “They are all tough,” he said. This also is a state budget year, and the president said that he hopes gains can be made in base funding, asset preservation and capital improvements. He said recruiting efforts are showing positive results but that it is “to early to tell” if that will be the case at census time.
- He expects recommendations form the Honors College Task Force.
- The doctoral programs will be moving forward to the CPE.

• **Campus Safety:**

WKU Chief of Police Mitchell Walker sent an email regarding the recent shooting at Florida State University. I responded to his email and sent him a copy of the SGA resolution on campus safety that was presented to the SEC some weeks back. He said anyone interested in school shooting safety training can contact him. I have suggested in the past that this training is long overdue, and I mentioned that to the president in our recent meeting. I would strongly encourage deans and department heads to consider training for faculty interested in receiving it.

This will be my last Faculty Senate business cycle and my last report. I appreciate all the work done by Committee Chairs and senators serving on committees, and the Faculty Senate body. Special thanks to my fellow officers and to Jessica Steenbergen, who kept my head screwed on securely.

The Faculty Senate with a new slate of officers will be in good hands in the coming academic year.

As I have said in the past, Faculty Senate work can be a lot of work and hard work, but it is extremely important work. Don’t let your fellow faculty members think any differently.