Gary Ransdell – 15 year anniversary

VFTH

10/25/11

This fall, Dr. Gary Ransdell is celebrating his 15th year as president of Western Kentucky University.

In this week’s View from the Hill, Amy Bingham gets some perspective on how transformational life on the hill as been since 1997.

Well, for starters, there’s been a 45 percent growth in enrollment, a 200 percent increase in the institutional budget ---and 600 million dollars in capital construction has virtually rebuilt the campus.

It’s been exciting to watch as you’ll hear from some who had a front row seat.

When Gary Ransdell was interviewing to become president of WKU, he remembers the board of regents issuing a challenge to make a lasting transformation of the University from top to bottom.

 “That is what turned me on about the opportunity to come back to my alma mater, but it was also what the board was focused on, which I thought was a very progressive and aggressive line of thought at that time.”

Lois Gray, who became a regent during the search process, says Ransdell exceeded all their expections.

 “Gary’s vision was greater than ours. I can’t speak for other board members but I don’t think we saw what was coming. “

Longtime registrar Freida Eggleton began her career at WKU the same time as Dr. Ransdell. They started out in the office of University Relations. He went on to SMU where he revealed his plans for the future to her over a 1981 lunch in Dallas.

3:20ish “He shared with me at that time that his ambition was to chart his career so that he could eventually become President of this Institution.”

Dr. Ransdell is now the longest serving president at a Kentucky university after the recent retirement of former NKU President Jim Votruba. Their tenures coincided with higher education reform in the commonwealth.

 “Gary and I have spoken often about what was so exciting about that period when we arrived and it was the combination of being able to lead an institution but also participate in this ambitious reform agenda that was taking place.”

Even without full funding of the reform, lawmakers on both sides of the aisle praise the president’s implementation.

 “President Ransdell has picked up the ball (and some other universities have) through private giving and kept the downturn from being devastating.”

 “I think Western took advantage of it more than any other university in the state and I don’t say that just because I’m a hometown guy. It’s really true in that the Bucks for brains, Western would match that money quickly.”

And when it comes to students, well you can see for yourself the connection Dr. Ransdell has made when they walk across the stage at commencement.

 “On many other campuses they wouldn’t know who the President is, let alone to feel comfortable to high five and embrace him at graduation.”

Gary Ransdell has no intention of slowing down. In fact , he has many more goals to accomplish over the next several years.

With this week’s View from the Hill, I’m Amy Bingham.

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