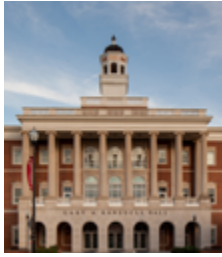


WKU College of Education and Behavioral Sciences awarded \$2m to support rural educator apprenticeship

A four-year, \$2 million U.S. Department of Education award, Project CARE (Collaborative Apprenticeships for Rural Educators), will support high school students in rural areas of Kentucky as they pursue careers as K-12 teachers.



Project CARE enhances WKU's partnership with the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS) to provide a pathway for future teachers to begin their college preparation in high school through a collaborative dual credit K-12 Teaching and Learning Early College Pathway. High School students enroll in coursework at KCTCS and WKU with flexible instructional delivery systems, clinical experiences in a residency model, and a network of support, advising, and mentoring. Students can earn up to 60 hours towards their bachelor's degree while in high school, including fulfillment of the Teaching and Learning Pathway, general education requirements, and up to 24 hours of the required Educator Preparatory Program coursework. KCTCS coursework is fully transferable to WKU.

A unique component of Project CARE is its establishment of a paid Registered Apprenticeship Program for K-12 teachers. Program participants will enter the Registered Apprenticeship Program upon high school graduation. Project CARE's residential teaching approach allows participants to complete a bachelor's degree within two years of high school graduation.

Project CARE Director and Principal Investigator, Dr. Susan Keesey, emphasized the opportunities Project CARE will provide for Kentucky students and schools: "This collaborative partnership between KCTCS, WKU, and high schools provides our district partners the opportunity to choose their future teachers. This opens up opportunities for many more rural high school students to become teachers which is much needed during this critical teacher shortage."

Project CARE will support teacher apprenticeship in ten Kentucky school districts, including Caverna Independent, Grayson County, and Nelson County, among others.

WKU and partnering districts are working to find innovative ways to address the teacher shortage. Through Project CARE, members of rural communities can further their education—with the opportunity to do so without leaving those communities.

WKU

NEWS FOR THE COUNCIL ON POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

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WKU finishes sixth nationally in 2024 Hearst Overall Intercollegiate Competition

Western Kentucky University's School of Media & Communication continued its tradition of national success in the annual **Hearst Journalism Awards Program** with a sixth-place finish in the 2024 Overall Intercollegiate Competition.

WKU has placed in the top eight overall for 31 straight years with four overall championships in 2000, 2001, 2005 and 2018.

The top 10 schools in the 2024 Overall Intercollegiate Competition are University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; University of Florida; Syracuse University; University of Missouri; Arizona State University; WKU; Pennsylvania State University; Michigan State University; University of Iowa; and University of Maryland.

Often called "The Pulitzers of college journalism," the Hearst program includes five writing, two photo, one audio, two television and four multimedia competitions offering up to \$700,000 in scholarships, matching grants and stipends. Currently, 105 member universities of the Association of Schools of Journalism and Mass Communication with accredited undergraduate journalism programs are eligible to participate in the Hearst competitions.

In the 2023-2024 Hearst program, WKU finished second in the Intercollegiate Multimedia Competition and received a \$4,000 award, fourth in the Intercollegiate Photojournalism Competition and 10th in the Intercollegiate Broadcast Competition.

WKU's history of success in Hearst competitions includes winning the Intercollegiate Photojournalism Competition 29 times in the past 35 years and winning the Intercollegiate Multimedia Competition nine times since it was added in 2010.

WKU announces Opportunity Fund surpasses \$100m goal

During the annual Faculty and Staff Convocation on Monday, August 12, WKU President Timothy C. Caboni announced that the WKU Opportunity Fund had surpassed its \$100 million goal, raising \$102,779,663 to benefit WKU students.

During his Investiture in April 2018, President Caboni shared his vision for a student-centered fundraising campaign designed to remove barriers to education through needs-based financial assistance. In August 2021, President Caboni announced that the University had surpassed the Opportunity Fund's initial goal of \$50 million and set a new goal of \$100 million. Just three years later, fundraising eclipsed the goal, and 267 new endowed scholarship funds were established in the seven-year period.

"Providing students with access to a degree – access that would otherwise not be possible – opens doors for students by relieving for them a portion of their student debt," President Caboni said. "Once they are students, we work to keep them in school all the way through graduation – and this is important – because we have students who face unthinkable financial circumstances not only during their first year, but in year two, year three and year four. And sometimes the only way they can return to our Hill to finish their final semester is with a little help."

One goal of the Opportunity Fund is to provide hands-on, applied educational experiences beyond the classroom because data show that these elevate students' overall collegiate experience.

"For those struggling to make ends meet, the notion of attending a conference or participating in study abroad, for example, may be out of reach," President Caboni said. "Without help, that is."

Amanda Trabue, Vice President for Philanthropy & Alumni Engagement, said the campaign total includes gifts from alumni, friends, corporations, foundations and other organizations, and this total includes both current gifts and estate commitments. The fund has provided private scholarship support to 20,205 students.

"WKU faculty and staff work each day to support our students, and you are the foundation of the sense of family and community that students count on during their WKU Experience," President Caboni said. "Thank you for your work. I want to offer a special thanks to those who choose to give back financially to the programs that matter the most to you. Thank you to the 740 current and retired WKU employees who donated more than \$6 million in total to the Opportunity Fund."

"The tradition of creating opportunities for WKU students began in 1923 when founder Dr. Henry Hardin Cherry received a \$100 gift from a faculty member to support students," President Caboni added. "This belief in paying it forward and helping others will always be part of what it means to be a Hilltopper."



WKU LifeSkills Center for Child Welfare Education and Research secures \$5.8m in external funding to expand services

WKU LifeSkills Center for Child Welfare Education and Research (LCCWEAR) recently received \$5.8 million in external funding to expand critical services. With a mission to advance child welfare across Kentucky, LCCWEAR includes three new transformative initiatives in partnership with Kentucky's Cabinet for Health and Family Services.

Dr. Austin Griffiths, Principal Investigator, will lead the Child Welfare Analytics Collaborative, a multifaceted partnership designed to strategically benefit the community using data science, while proactively seeking solutions to essential areas that impact the Commonwealth and its most vulnerable populations. This initiative encompasses a wide range of services from adoption-related services, out-of-home care-related services, child protective services, transitional services, clinical services, quality assurance-related services, prevention services, adult protective services, etc.

Led by Principal Investigator Dr. Griffiths, alongside co-investigator Dr. Matt Woodward, the Integrated Family Trauma Treatment Clinic provides free access to cutting-edge intergenerational intervention for families with trauma to mitigate the risk of recurrence of childhood trauma and prevent out-of-home placement.

The Training Resource Center, also led by Dr. Griffiths, is a vital statewide partnership designed to support youth who are in foster care, provide specialized services to ensure their successful transition to adulthood, and improve the capacity of resource parents across the Commonwealth.

Dr. Griffiths shared, "LCCWEAR is committed to improving the lives of Kentucky's most vulnerable children and families. These initiatives, supported by external funding, put us in a position to make substantial strides in child welfare."

The expansion of LCCWEAR's services includes 16 full-time staff members in the WKU College of Health and Human Services Community Health Sciences Complex at South Campus.