



A LEADING AMERICAN UNIVERSITY WITH INTERNATIONAL REACH
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

February 15, 2016

The Honorable Andy Beshear
Attorney General
Office of the Attorney General
700 Capitol Avenue, Suite 118
Frankfort, KY 40601-3449

Dear Attorney General Beshear:

We are having a discussion at WKU regarding the current practice for public distribution of salary information for all WKU employees. For years, we simply posted all salaries on documents in our library and provided them when open records requests were received. Several years ago, we began listing all employee names and salaries on WKU's website for anyone, anywhere to access. Following a recent data breach with Anthem, which we believe resulted in approximately 130 WKU employees experiencing identity theft leading to compromises on Federal Income Tax returns, we have been advised by IT security officials that having global access to employee salary information on our website puts our employees at risk. It is my responsibility to protect our employees as much as possible. We have, therefore, initiated the practice of producing hard copies of salary data when requested and listing employee salary data on our website accessible through a WKU password. Specifically, our proposed practice is as follows:

1. We produce a book with all employees' names and salary information and provide it to our University Senate, our Student Government Association, and our Staff Council.
2. We place two hard copies in the WKU library.
3. We honor all open records and freedom of information requests by providing a hard copy of all salary information.
4. All WKU students and employees have direct and full electronic access to the salary information on the website by providing a WKU password.
5. We submit all WKU employee salary information to Kentucky's Open Door website salary search portal, which was created by executive order by Governor Beshear, following a recommendation of a Transparency Task Force he created.

This is to officially request an Attorney General ruling on whether or not this procedure is compliant with state open records and freedom of information statutes. Particularly, is it compatible with the August 17, 2004, Attorney General Opinion related to open records.

A Resolution forwarded to me by our University Senate is also attached. This resolution prompts this Attorney General request.

The Spirit Makes the Master

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Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter. Your ruling will dictate whether the current WKU procedure is compliant, or whether all employees' names and salaries will be posted on our website with unfettered, global access.

Sincerely,



Gary A. Ransdell

GAR:sh

Attachment

xc: Ms. Deborah Wilkins, WKU General Counsel
✓ Dr. Kate Hudepohl, Chair, University Senate
Mr. Gordon Johnson, Chief Information Technology Officer