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March 2, 2017

MEMORANDUM

TO: Dr. Kate Hudepohl, Chair, University Senate
FROM: Gary A. Ransdell 
SUBJECT: Two Senate Resolutions

The following is my response to two resolutions recently received by the University Senate. They include a "Resolution on University Senate Representation on Administrative Council" and a "Resolution on Implementing a Collaborative Budget/Fiscal Planning Process." Regarding the resolution on Senate representation on Administrative Council, I remind the Senate that the Senate specifically, and the faculty generally, have a voice on the Administrative Council through the Provost. The Administrative Council is made up of the University's Executive Officers who have a direct reporting responsibility to the President. All but two AC members report directly to the President. The two exceptions are Dr. Lynne Holland, Dean of Students and WKU Chief Diversity Officer, who reports to Brian Kuster, Vice President for Student Affairs; and Dr. Brian Meredith, WKU's Chief Enrollment and Graduation Officer, who reports to the WKU Provost. These two serve on the Administrative Council because of the pervasive nature of their duties and the importance of their engagement in Administrative Council discussions as they relate to the various divisions of the university. The reporting relationships of the University's Executive Officers are important, as each member of the Administrative Council has specific and absolute accountability for the function of their respective divisions of WKU. Accountability is the key word. Everyone on the Administrative is professionally accountable for a major portion of our campus life.

I want to also point out that the Administrative Council is not an official body where votes are taken or minutes recorded. It is a group of University Executive Officers which meets weekly to review and discuss important University policies, set strategies, and deliberate on key matters important to our University community at any given point in time. It is the practice of the Administrative Council to discuss matters and achieve a thoughtful level of consensus with regard to whatever topic which may be before the Administrative Council. From time to time, it is necessary for the President to make a unilateral decision; but in most cases, decisions are made through thoughtful input, the weighing of pros and cons, and a consensus among the accountable parties around the table.

Memo to Kate Hudepohl
Page 2
March 2, 2017

For the reasons stated above, I cannot support a Senate designated faculty representative on the Administrative Council.

I might add that the Administrative Council has been a function of my Presidency since 1997. Dr. Thomas Meredith, prior to my Presidency, handled his decision making matters differently, and I expect Dr. Timothy Caboni will handle his decision making matters in a manner of his own choosing.

Regarding the second resolution on "Implementing a Collaborative Budget/Fiscal Planning Process," I can state unequivocally that ongoing communication with the Senate and the rest of the University campus is both important and valuable. I have tried to maintain ongoing, frequent reporting to the entire campus with regard to our budget process and deliberations. All divisions of the university and all internal constituencies are well represented in budget decisions. Those deliberations are led by Ms. Ann Mead, the Senior Vice President for Finance and Administration at WKU, but they include all of our Executive Officers and others on the Administrative Council. Ann also engages our campus Budget Council in budget-related discussions. I might add, however, that such discussions are more productive when spending decisions are being made, rather than when cutting decisions are to be made.

I expect each Vice President to engage key individuals within his or her respective division of the University in all budget-related matters. I have tried to engender a culture of open communication, accountability, and shared responsibility in budgeting and fiscal planning at WKU, but that accountability rests with the executive officers of the institution.

As has been my practice since 1997, I welcome the opportunity to appear before the University Senate to discuss the University budget, or any other matter of importance to the campus and/or the Senate. I will continue to work closely with Ann Mead and her staff in the Finance and Administration division of the University in the creation of the University's budget moving forward.

Again, President-elect Caboni may choose to address the budget process differently, but I will continue to follow what I consider to be a sound budget preparation process.

Thank you for your interest in the University's decision making and budgeting process.

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xc: Dr. David Lee, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Ms. Ann Mead, Senior Vice President for Finance and Administration