

# REPORT for the Budget & Finance Committee Meeting of 4 Dec. 2025

The Budget & Finance Committee last met on 11-04-2025.

## Attending Committee Members (Voting):

Daniel Boamah (Alt., CHHS, Social Work)  
Greg Ellis-Griffith (At-large, CHHS, Public Health)  
Said Ghezal (At-Large, CEBS)  
Jim Lindsey (GFCB) – Interim Chair  
Blair Thomas (PCAL, Poli-Sci)

## Attending Committee Members (Ex-Officio)

Bud Fischer (Provost, Ex-Officio).  
Shane Spiller (GFCB, Faculty Regent)

## Absent (Voting and Ex-Officio)

Sophia Arjana (PCAL, History, At-Large)  
Gordon Baylis (At-Large, OCSE, Psych. Sci.)  
Jakob Barker (SGA)  
Palav Bera (Alt., At-Large, OCSE)  
Eric Kondratieff, Chair (PCAL, History)  
Rui Zhang (OCSE, Chem. & Biochemistry)  
Todd Seguin (Libraries)

## Meeting Recap

The meeting began with administrative matters including Jim Lindsey volunteering to Chair in place of Eric Kondratieff (absent for family reasons) and moving for approval of previous minutes. This was followed by discussion of questions for upcoming meetings with college deans, in particular, Dean Basta of CHHS. Shane Spiller reviewed financial matters, including a detailed discussion of an upcoming board meeting covering budget, housing management changes, and a new lease property agreement. The conversation ended with Provost Fischer's discussion of enrollment challenges at WKU, highlighting the need for innovative strategies to attract students and maintain the university's long-term viability in the face of industry changes.

## Next steps

- Add questions about fund allocation and decision-making process to the list of questions for Dean Basta.
- All committee members (especially those from the relevant college): Send any additional questions for Dean Basta to Eric (or the group) before the February meeting.
- Consider putting the list of questions for Dean Basta into a shared online document for collaborative input or coordinate with Eric on how to manage the document.
- Include relevant board meeting agenda items and documents (e.g., executive item on housing/pre-development agreement) in the meeting notes, if appropriate.

## Meeting Minutes

### 1. Meeting called to order by Jim Lindsey (3:45 pm)

### 2. Approval of Meeting Minutes from 11-04-2025

Jim Lindsey, Interim Chair: motion for approval of the previous meeting's minutes; attendees approved.

### 3. New Business

#### a. Discussion of Innovative Space Utilization Strategies

The committee then discussed questions for Dean Basta, with Shane Spiller raising a point about the proactive and innovative space utilization strategies by Dean Basta at South Campus for faculty research, community outreach, community health, all while fulfilling the mission of the college.

Jim Lindsey suggested adding this topic to the list of questions for the upcoming meeting with Dean Basta.

#### b. Preparing Questions for Meeting with CHHS College Dean Basta (For Feb. 2026 BFC Meeting)

The committee discussed preparing questions for upcoming meetings with college deans, including questions already discussed with Dean Murphy (CEBS) and those for the upcoming meeting with Dean Basta (CHHS).

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**Lindsey** shared questions from a previous ChatGPT request and email thread, which Ellis-Griffith and Boamah reviewed and found fair.

**Boamah** suggested asking about the fund allocation process to different departments: how are the funds allocated and what's the process?

Committee agreed to consider additional questions until the February meeting and to submit them to Eric Kondratieff.

**Fischer** inquired about how Corinne was prompted for her previous PowerPoint presentation, which Jim remembered as a pre-meeting communication to Dean Murphy about potential questions to address.

### 4. Faculty Regent Report – Shane Spiller

#### a. Upcoming Board Meeting:

Reported on the board meeting coming up in one week (Dec. 11) which will include discussions on sabbaticals, finance and budget, the internal and external audit, and fourth quarter financials.

#### b. Housing Management Shift:

Highlighted a major shift in housing management, involving a pre-development agreement with Gilbane, a third-party company, to improve dorm experiences for students—housing that is more responsive to their needs, including some requests coming through SGA—and financial aid packages that wrap in housing costs.

Emphasized the board's fiduciary responsibility in reviewing this long-term deal, which requires foresight, careful planning, and state legislative approval. He encourages attendees to review the detailed executive item in the BOR agenda for the Dec. 11 meeting. WKU currently working on a predevelopment agreement (and there is an out clause)

#### c. Campus Transformation:

**Boamah** asked about the timeline.

**Spiller** discussed the authorization of a lease property and the plan to move students from some dorms to Center Hall, with a goal of a dramatically different-looking campus in three years and significant changes in five years, pending state legislative approval.

Noted also that there was a Request for Proposals process to which multiple companies responded; Gilbane emerged as the best partner for WKU in this process.

### 5. Provost Report – Bud Fischer

#### a. Budget and Budgeting Progress

Reported that last year's budget ended in the black for the first time in 20 years and the current quarter's budget is still on target.

Also pointed out that the FY27 budget needs to be created before June for board approval, with a kickoff in early January. A committee is working on the ramp model revitalization with recommendations to be made by the end of Spring 2026 for potential inclusion in the FY28 budget.

### 6. Open Discussion

#### a. Addressing Enrollment and Budget Challenges

**Spiller**, responding to Daniel Boamah's question about WKU's positioning for the upcoming 'enrollment cliff,' expressed concerns about the university's financial situation, noting that while WKU is better positioned than sister institutions, WKU is at a flat budget after previous budget cuts, including imbalances in some areas that have been pushed to the point of strategic failure. Areas of concern include faculty support, Library support, IT on campus, and HR (all areas that have seen serious reductions in personnel). We have cut all we can and now need to put some back.

**Spiller** emphasized that the enrollment cliff is a national problem, but we have an opportunity in this region. He believes the housing situation on campus, and external perceptions of WKU's housing, have held us back in recruiting. Along

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with addressing the housing issues in a dramatic way (see above) to address enrollment issues, another issue we need to address is to demonstrate the value of higher education, particularly given concerns about AI replacing jobs. We need to demonstrate that a WKU education is not just a rubber-stamp degree but has real value. So that we are no longer just moving money from one area to another, we need to grow enrollment.

**Fischer** agreed, highlighting the importance of communicating the value of higher education to students, parents, and broader society. Instead of letting others define what higher education is, we need to define it ourselves and show the value in it as proven by the data.

**Fischer** pointed out, regarding enrollment challenges and strategies for WKU, that only 47% of eligible students in Kentucky pursue higher education, with many not enrolling in college at all (60% who apply and are admitted to WKU but do not come go to no university at all). The relatively low level of college enrolment in KY is ultimately impacting the workforce.

He also emphasized the need attract students with modern amenities like new residence halls (most of those still open are over 60 years old and a known deterrent to some applicants). He noted that we are “in a battle with UK” which has already done some of the things WKU is now working on with residence halls, partnerships, etc.

In addition, WKU needs to innovate curriculum: UK has turned to A.I. to predict growth areas in KY and has already put together 27 programs so far intended to address those future needs to attract more students.

**Boamah** asked about non-traditional students, noting that with the 2008 recession birth rates dropped off substantially.

**Fischer** agreed, believes the “cliff” will last at least until 2027 or so. He also mentioned a 12% growth in WKU’s online programs and efforts to attract adult learners by making all of GE and variety of certificate programs available online.

**Ellis-Smith** asked if WKU has marketing programs aimed at recruiting non-traditional students.

**Fischer:** We have a program called Re-Up. We hired a company that brought in a hundred new students in the fall, mostly adult learners, who hadn't finished but who had less than 15 hours to finish. That's helped WKU with graduation rates, and we retains 75% of the tuition on these students; so, we will continue to work with Re-Up and continue to find new avenues to expand, including in areas outside of Kentucky, where we continue to grow. The biggest increases recently are in students from Indiana and Illinois, and we are now considering targeting the Huntsville, Alabama area.

**Spiller** stressed that the demographic cliff is “not a swoop”; birth rates have not recovered to pre-2008 levels. It is crucial that we develop long-term enrollment strategies to better position WKU to survive coming upheavals in higher education. That’s why the current emphasis on updating and upgrading housing is so important for WKU’s long term viability.

### 7. CONCLUSION / ADJOURNMENT

**Jim Lindsey** asked if anyone had further questions. None did. He asked for a motion to adjourn; **Daniel Boamah** made the motion. Meeting adjourned at approximately 4:22 pm.