



Western Kentucky University  
2026-2028 Biennial Budget Request

**Operating Request:**

The postsecondary education budget request includes a 4.5% inflationary increase in the base appropriation for each public university in the first year of the biennium. The budget request also includes an additional 4.5% inflationary increase in the base appropriation for each public university in the second year of the biennium.

For WKU, that is an increase in the first year of \$3,671,500 and an increase in the second year of \$3,671,600.

WKU is also requesting additional funding of \$2 million in each year of the biennium for the Gatton Academy of Mathematics and Science for a total of \$7,442,700 each year.

WKU requests to maintain the funding for the Kentucky Mesonet at \$1,750,000 in each year of biennium.



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**Tuition Waiver Reimbursement Program:**

WKU understands the importance of providing tuition assistance to certain underserved populations. However, tuition waivers are ultimately unfunded mandates. In FY 25, WKU spent \$4,695,972 on mandated tuition waivers. The postsecondary education budget request includes the creation of a \$30 million trust fund for the Tuition Waiver Reimbursement Program. This fund is intended to replace lost revenue to the public universities due to the state mandated tuition waivers.

The public universities are also asking for statutory changes to all tuition waivers to require recipients to complete a FAFSA, making the tuition waiver last dollar in. This approach would maximize use of federal grant funds and reduce costs for the institutions and the Commonwealth.

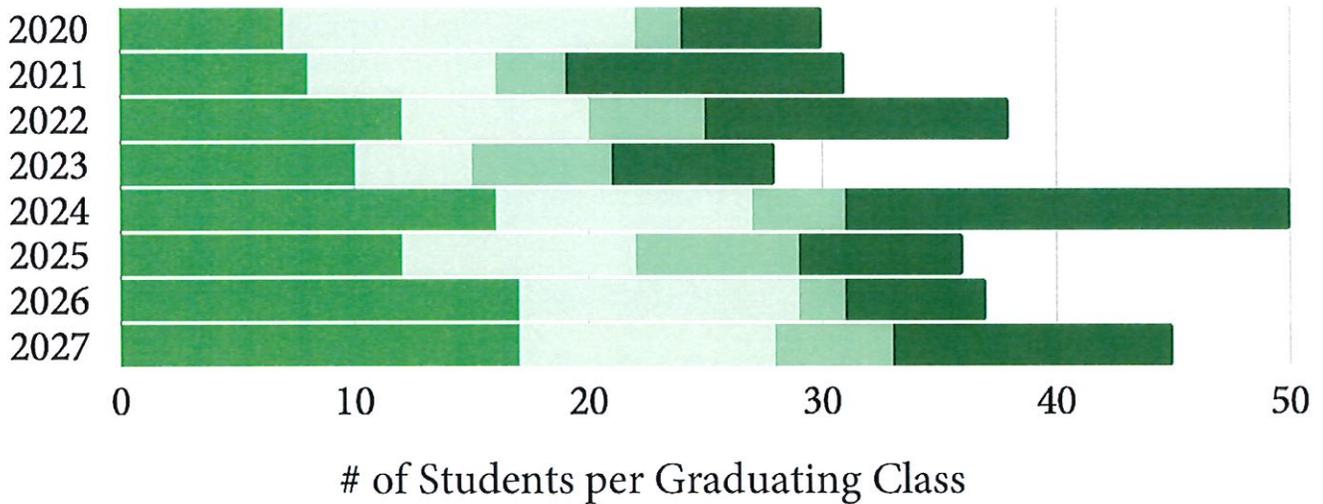
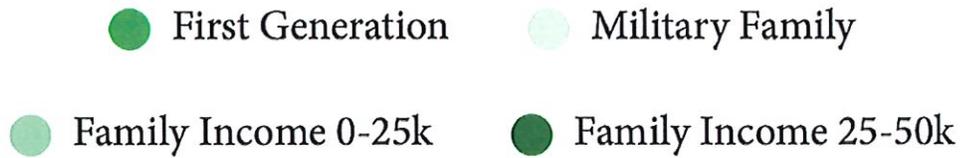
Tuition Waiver Program	Statutory Authority	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Persons 65 or older	KRS 164.284	144,016	121,253	151,690	193,257	149,358
Survivors of Police Officers, Firefighters, Volunteer Firefighters, or employee participating in a state-administered retirement system killed in the line of duty	KRS 164.2841	126,145	129,205	110,427	64,947	45,486
Child or Spouse of Disabled Police Officers, Firefighters, and Volunteer Firefighters or employee participating in a state-administered retirement system disabled in line of duty	KRS 164.2842	0	0	0	0	0
Supervising Teachers and Resource Teachers	KRS 164.2845	64,105	60,921	56,328	59,850	40,250
War Veterans	KRS 164.480, 164.490, 164.500	2,079,568	2,093,129	2,370,012	2,555,750	3,101,658
Children, Step-Children and Spouse of National Guard or Armed Services Member Killed in Action	KRS 164.505	0	0	0	0	0
Children, Step-Children, Orphans and Spouse of Disabled National Guard Member, War Veteran, Prisoner of War, Missing in Action or Armed Services Member	KRS 164.515	0	0	0	0	0
Nonremarried Spouse, Children, Step-Children, and Orphans of War Veterans Killed in Action	KRS 164.507	0	0	0	0	0
Foster and Adopted Children	KRS 164.2847	944,026	1,013,459	1,226,056	1,330,031	1,359,221
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$3,357,860</b>	<b>\$3,417,967</b>	<b>\$3,914,512</b>	<b>\$4,203,835</b>	<b>\$4,695,972</b>

# THE GATTON ACADEMY

## *of Mathematics and Science*



### FAMILY INFORMATION

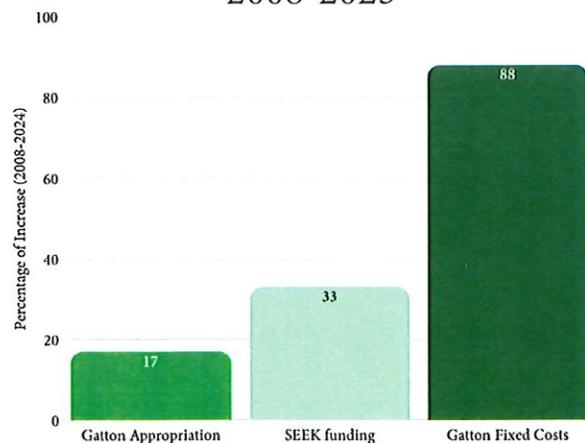


### STUDENT OUTCOMES

	2008	2024
Research Participation	57%	69%
Research Presentations	11	141
ACT Incoming	27.1	29.1
ACT Outgoing	29.2	32
College Scholarships Offered	\$6.6 mil	\$30 mil
College Scholarships Accepted	\$2.6 mil	\$9 mil

### COSTS

Rising Costs of Attendance per student, 2008-2025





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**Performance Funding Pool:**

Support from the Commonwealth, through the performance-based funding model, is essential to the future and success of WKU's strategic initiatives. The additional commitment to the performance funding model approved in the previous biennial budget was greatly appreciated by WKU. This financial commitment from the Commonwealth is essential to the continued success of the University.

The postsecondary education budget request includes a \$30 million increase in the first year of the biennium and an additional \$15 million increase in the second year of the biennium to the performance funding pool. Two-thirds of the increase will fund the minimum distribution pool of which \$1.95 million will be allocated to each public university. The remaining one-third of the funds in the pool will flow through the performance funding model.

Website: <https://kymesonet.org>

App: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/kentucky-mesonet/id1365272874>

### THE NETWORK – WHAT IS IT?

**Purpose:** A sophisticated end-to-end system of 86 weather stations, the Kentucky Mesonet gathers and distributes detailed information about weather, water, and climate across the state in real-time. Financially supported by the Kentucky Legislature, the Mesonet aids state emergency management, agriculture, commerce, education, energy, health, transportation, and more.

### HOW DOES IT WORK?

**Observations:** Each Kentucky Mesonet station collects a variety of atmospheric, water, and soil information *every 5 minutes*. Parameters measured include air temperature, precipitation, relative humidity, solar radiation, pressure, wind speed and direction, soil temperature and moisture, and camera photos.

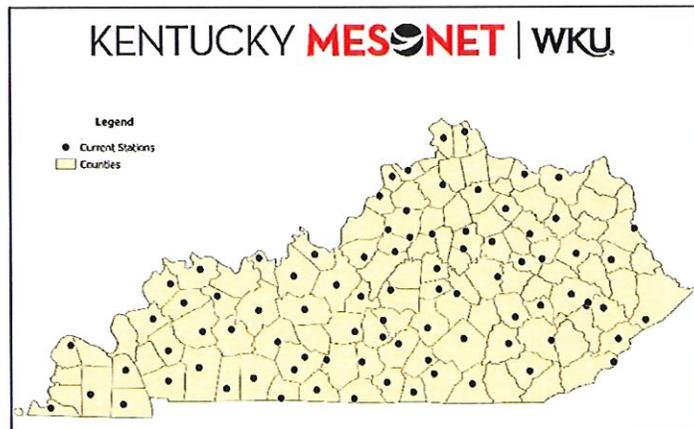
Data are processed within seconds of collection and disseminated to users nationwide via its streaming services (web, app, ftp). Over **100 million observations** are collected annually with over 1 billion observations archived and available for research, development, and education.



### NEXT-GENERATION INVESTMENT

**Moving Forward:** Utilizing critical state investment, Kentucky's network is now a national leader in environmental sensing. With continued investment, the Mesonet will continue to grow in coverage, quality, and utility as its partnerships and collaborations expand. Future areas of growth include:

- ✓ **Expanded Network.** Recent funding has allowed expansion into Clay, Green, Hancock, Powell, Spencer, and Trimble Counties, with additional sites planned for 2026. Continued investment will allow for a station in every county.
- ✓ **New Generation of Sensing.** New funds allowed for system upgrades in station dataloggers; power and communication hardware; new soil sensors; and cameras at every station. New sensing capabilities continue to be explored and tested.
- ✓ **New Products.** New value-added products are being developed and tested, providing specialized tools for much improved analyses, predictions, and decision-making.
- ✓ **Greater User Access.** Software upgrades to the website and app allow for easier, faster access to data and products, thereby improving the value of Mesonet data for real-time warnings and applications.
- ✓ **Expanded Partnerships.** Increased collaborations across the public, commercial and academic sectors support broader applications of the network, enabling a stronger, more resilient Commonwealth.





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**Capital Request:**

The postsecondary education budget request includes \$350 million in each year of the biennium for a third round of asset preservation funding with no institutional match. WKU would receive \$62 million of the asset preservation funds; \$31 million in each year of the biennium.

The budget request also includes \$280 million to construct a new facility for Potter College of Arts and Letters.

WKU requests restricted fund authorization for a Student Housing P3 project in the following amounts:

- Current Year (2025-2026): Phase 1 of the project, \$350,000,000
- First Year of the Biennium (2026-2027): Reauthorization of Phase 1, \$350,000,000
- Second Year of the Biennium (2027-2028): Phase 2 of the project, \$200,000,000
- Lease – Campus Flats

## WKU Student Housing Public Private Partnership

In May 2025, the Student Life Foundation, the 501(c)(3) entity that owns and maintains WKU's residence halls, announced the closure of Regents Hall and Normal Hall, two of its newest residence halls, and the permanent closure and demolition of Hilltopper Hall which opened in 2018. The closures followed results of an independent engineering assessment that necessitate code-related repairs to Regents and Normal and widespread design and construction flaws in Hilltopper Hall that are too costly to repair.

To address these challenging circumstances, WKU seeks to modernize and transform student housing with a public private partner with national expertise in student housing.

WKU Procurement Services issued a public Request for Qualifications WKU-10432 on June 10, 2025. Six firms responded by the July 10, 2025 deadline. The selection committee evaluated the responses and selected four firms to continue in the evaluation process.

WKU Procurement Services issued a Request for Proposal WKU-10435 to the four short-listed firms. All four firms were invited to campus workshop sessions and tours on August 13, 2025 and were required to submit their proposals on September 12, 2025. WKU also invited all four firms to present their proposals on September 24 and 25, 2025. The selection committee then chose two firms for a competitive best and final offer with presentations on October 2 and 3, 2025 and identified a preferred partner thereafter.

WKU provided written notification including a copy of the RFQ and RFP to the Capital Projects and Bond Oversight committee in advance of the November 2025 meeting.

In the coming weeks, WKU will seek the Board of Regents' approval of a predevelopment agreement with the preferred partner at the next quarterly meeting. WKU will also continue its statutory compliance in reporting to the Capital Projects and Bond Oversight Committee for approval.

WKU is requesting restricted fund authorization in the current year of the budget and each year of the next biennium. WKU also needs authorization to enter into a lease agreement with Campus Flats.

### Budget Request:

- Current Year (2025-2026): Phase 1 Authorization: \$350,000,000 Restricted Funds
- First Year of the Biennium (2026-2027): Reauthorization of Phase 1, \$350,000,000
- Second Year of the Biennium (2027-2028): Phase 2 of the project, \$200,000,000
- Lease – Campus Flats

WKU seeks a funding authorization in the current year (2025 -2026) to commence work to meet the deadlines set forth below.

Phase 1 of the project:

- Demolition of Douglas Keen and Hugh Poland in the existing site of the new construction project: completion by the summer of 2026
- Renovation and stabilization work of approximately \$26,000,000 in the enduring facilities: completion during the summer of 2026
- Repairs to Regents and Normal Halls: completion by summer of 2027
- Design and construction of a new residence hall that will house approximately 1,000 first-year students: completion by the summer of 2028
- Operation and maintenance of the new construction project and existing housing portfolio

Phase 2 of the project includes demolition of Rhodes Harlin Hall, McCormick Hall, and Gibert Hall and construction of new residential facilities in this footprint targeted to upper division students.

WKU will execute a two-year lease with ownership of Campus Flats apartments to provide additional occupancy while Normal Hall and Regents Hal remain offline and Hugh Poland and Douglas Keen are razed. WKU requests legislative approval for this lease agreement.

## **Potter College of Arts & Letters Overview**

Western Kentucky University's Potter College of Arts & Letters stands as a cornerstone of academic and creative excellence, embodying the University's commitment to the ever-changing and growing field of humanities. The College prepares students to become critical thinkers, effective communicators, and engaged global citizens capable of making meaningful contributions to their communities and professional fields .

Potter College encompasses a broad array of departments that span a wide range of disciplines, offering students numerous opportunities for exploration and academic development and a myriad of bachelor's and master's degree programs, including film, animation, game design, user experience, communications, modern languages, political science, and media, among others. The College provides a comprehensive education experience and an interdisciplinary framework that enables students to connect ideas across fields, while deepening their understanding of the human experience. It emphasizes experiential learning, encouraging students to engage in hands-on projects, research, internships, and creative endeavors that bridge classroom theory with real-world applications.

## **Construct Potter College of Arts and Letters**

Most of Potter College's departments are currently housed in the Ivan Wilson Fine Arts Center (FAC), a concrete building, constructed in 1971. Following an assessment of the building, it was deemed that a renovation would not be possible to bring the building up to modern standards including ADA compliance. Therefore, WKU is proposing to construct a new building to serve as the home of Potter College of Arts and Letters.

A new facility will allow the College to advance Kentucky's economic development and workforce readiness objectives by training students for Kentucky's growing creative economic sectors and providing the modern infrastructure necessary to attract quality faculty and students. The new building will provide the space for faculty and students to focus on economic development by facilitating creative industry workforce training, supporting research missions through cutting-edge scholarly work, and generating broad societal benefit through programming that drives regional growth by attracting business investment.

For example, the Bachelor of Fine Arts in Film Production is well-positioned to support the Kentucky Entertainment Incentive program. However, existing facilities limit the number of students who can enroll in the program. The Music Department continues to develop programming in commercial music to take advantage of the thriving music industry in our region. Similarly, existing facilities limit the ability to invest in the type of infrastructure

necessary to support a robust commercial music program. A new building for Potter College of Arts and Letters is critical in providing industry-standard training that meets employers' expectations in these high-growth fields.

This new state-of-the-art facility would serve as a catalyst for innovation, collaboration, and community engagement, featuring cutting-edge spaces designed to support the needs of students and faculty across disciplines. Advanced technology in classrooms and production facilities would provide students with the tools they need to excel in digital media, graphic design, and multimedia storytelling, ensuring they are prepared for careers in rapidly evolving industries. Shared studios, rehearsal areas, and performance venues would foster interdisciplinary collaboration, enabling students to explore creative approaches and gain valuable experience working across fields.

Additionally, expanded facilities would support growth of existing programs and allow the introduction of new initiatives, creating opportunities for partnerships with local schools, businesses, and community organizations, enriching the University's outreach efforts.

Beyond its benefit to students, the new facility would strengthen WKU's connection to the Bowling Green community. By bridging the university and the community, the new building would embody WKU's mission to transform lives and elevate communities.

In short, modern studios, fabrication labs and a University makerspace will empower students to create, prototype, and problem-solve jointly across disciplines. Collaborative classrooms will integrate business, design and cultural studies, preparing students for leadership roles across a spectrum of industries. Expanded production spaces and smart classrooms will support cutting-edge journalism, broadcasting, film and digital content creation. Facilities will include adaptable spaces to support programs such as brewing and distilling sciences, aligning WKU's academic innovation with regional economic strengths. A new building will equip today's graduates with the skills – creative, technical and entrepreneurial – needed to thrive in Kentucky's economy and beyond.

A new building for Potter College of Arts and Letters will also support reaccreditation. While all programs have been reaccredited in their most recent review cycle, each accreditor continues to note that facilities and physical plant issues were "among the most pressing to be addressed," raising concerns that facilities no longer meet professional standards and noting that continued deficiencies could jeopardize accreditation - undermining the University's ability to attract qualified faculty and students. The National Office of Arts Accreditation includes four major arts accrediting organizations: The National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD), the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM), The National Association of Schools of Dance (NASD), and the National

Association of Schools of Theatre (NAST). WKU is one of 42 institutions nationally to hold all four accreditations. Ensuring WKU programs continue to promote excellence through meeting or exceeding professional accreditation standards is an institutional priority.

Ultimately, a new building would empower students and faculty to reach their full potential, creating an environment that inspires creativity, encourages exploration, and supports professional development. This investment would ensure that WKU remains at the forefront of the growing humanities fields, contributing to the University's legacy of excellence and its broader mission to enrich lives through education.

**Funds requested:**

The requested \$280 million will support the development and enhancement of critical infrastructure, facilities, and technologies to ensure long-term growth and sustainability, with a focus on meeting the needs of multiple departments and academic units across campus. A portion of the funds will be allocated to the demolition of outdated buildings and site preparation for new construction, clearing the way for the development of a state-of-the-art facility. Funds will be directed towards upgrading technology infrastructure, including both physical IT systems and advanced digital technologies to enhance smart classrooms and research capabilities.

The construction of a new facility will include features designed to foster collaboration, innovation, and academic excellence across disciplines. A portion of the funds will also be reserved for property acquisition, ensuring room for campus expansion and improving accessibility.

Finally, critical infrastructure improvements, including utilities, roads, parking, and landscaping, will be made to enhance the overall campus experience. The significant funding request reflects the high costs associated with installing and maintaining advanced systems and other specialized spaces. This investment provides the necessary flexibility to address a range of current and future needs, ensuring that our campus remains a dynamic, resilient environment that supports academic research, and community engagement for years to come.