Budget Review Subcommittee on Postsecondary Education

PRESIDENT TIMOTHY C. CABONI • FEBRUARY 19, 2026

Record-Breaking Successes

- Academic Year 2024-25:
  - WKU achieved the university's ***highest ever*** graduation rate of ***59.1%.***
  - WKU awarded **4,688** total degrees - the ***most of any year in university history.***
- Fall 2025:
  - WKU's first-to-second year retention rate reached **79.4%**, ***the highest in university history.***
  - WKU's new graduate student enrollment increased by **nearly 25%** compared to fall 2024.
- Fiscal year 2026 marks WKU's **first structurally balanced budget since 2005,** achieved **without the use of one-time reserves.**

Research Growth and PhD Programs

- WKU's 2024 HERD total was $11 million - **the *highest* HERD total results *than in any other year* since data collection began in 2010.**
- Thanks to the passage of Senate Bill 77 last session, WKU now has a pathway to offer its first PhD program. We will launch our initial program, **Data Sciences**, in fall 2027.
- We persist in our aspiration to become Kentucky's first R2 institution, a strategic and logical next step for WKU and an achievement that offers enumerable benefits.

Operating Request

4.5% Inflationary Increase

- The postsecondary education budget request includes a **4.5% increase in the base appropriation** for each public university in the first year of the biennium, as well as the second.
    - First year/WKU = **$3,671,500**
    - Second year/WKU = **$3,671,600**
- This increase is especially **critical** in supporting fixed cost increases, including health insurance, utilities, maintenance and IT related costs.

Operating Request

Performance Funding Pool Increase

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

Operating Request

Tuition Waiver Reimbursement Program

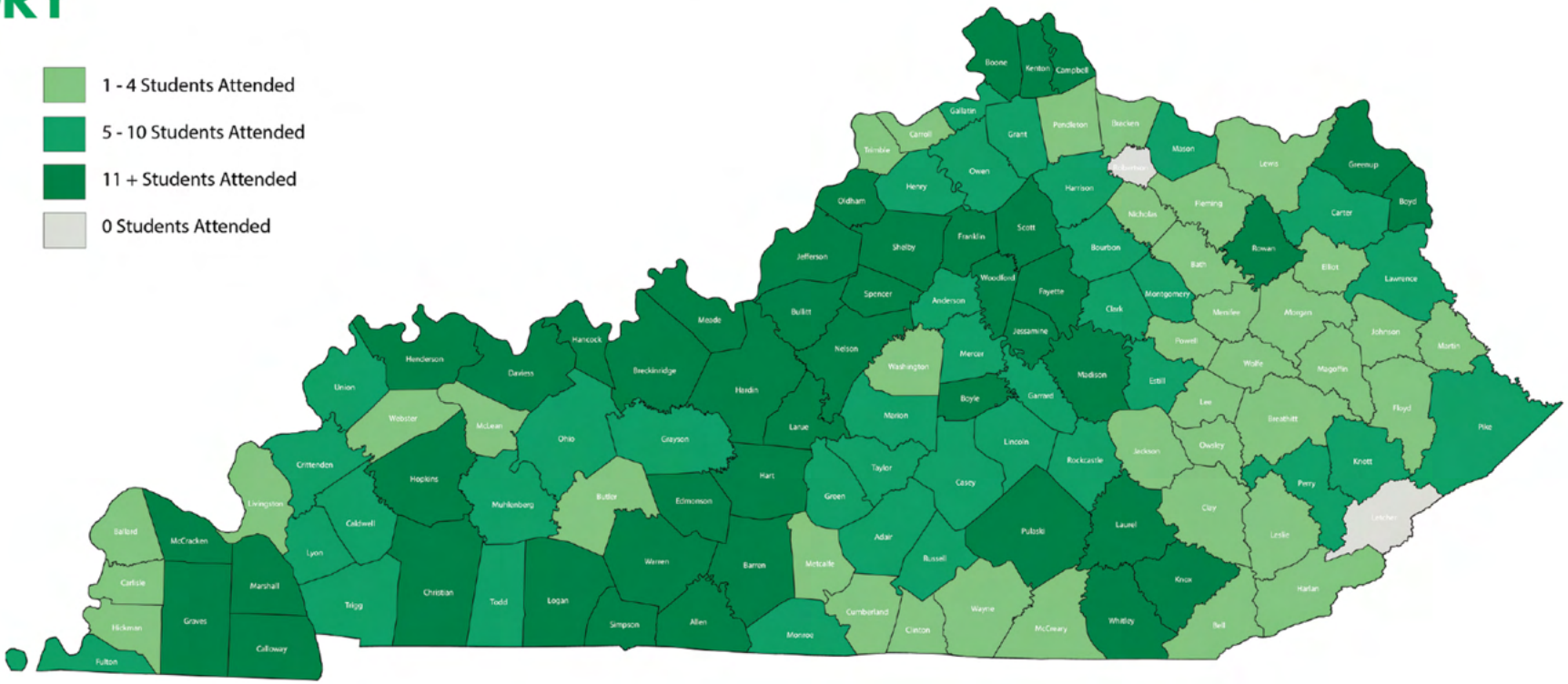
- The postsecondary budget request includes the creation of a **$30 million trust fund** for the Tuition Waiver Reimbursement Program.

- We are also asking for statutory changes to all tuition waivers to require FAFSA completion.

Operating Request

The Gatton Academy of Mathematics and Science

HISTORY

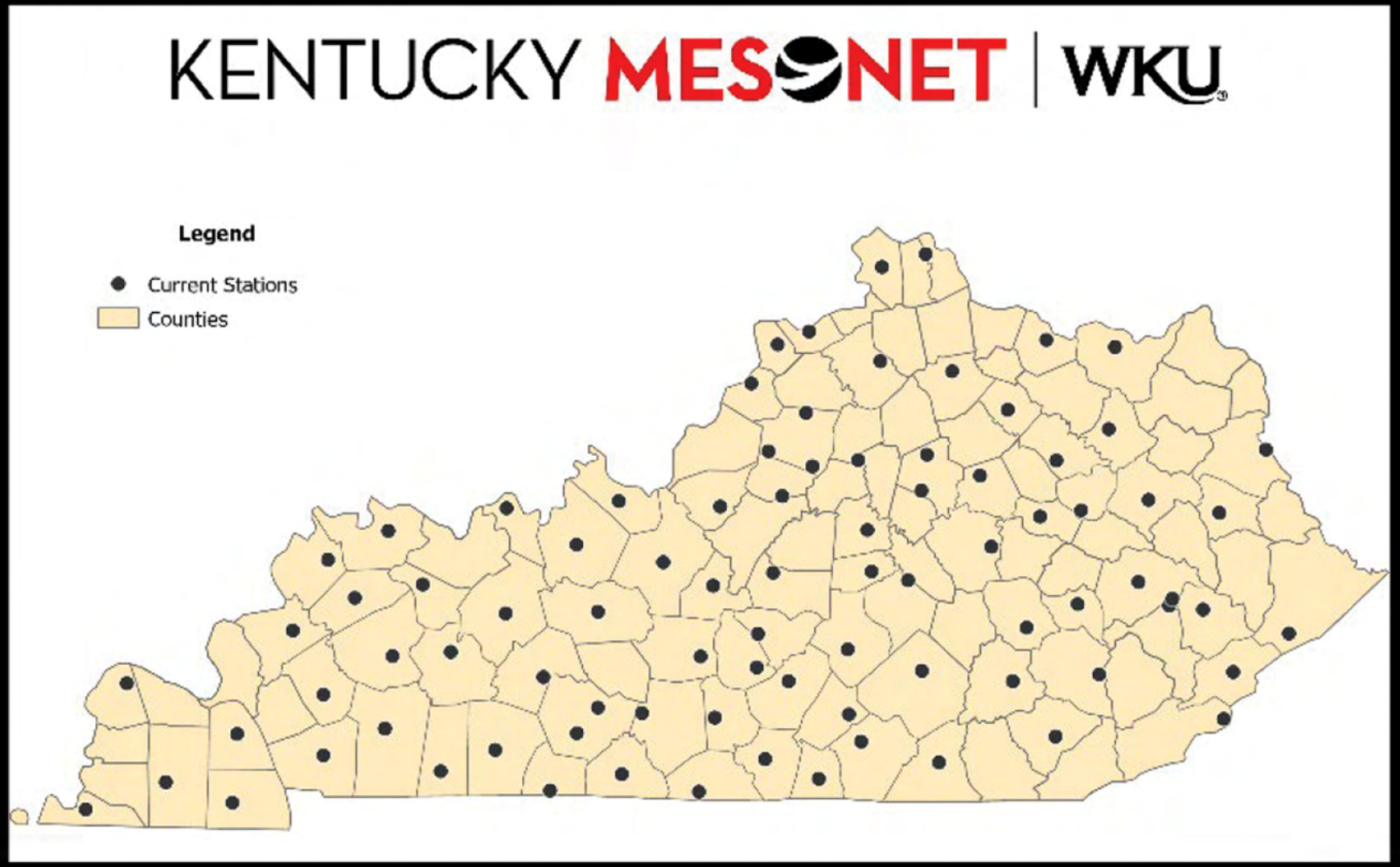


Students who Attended in Classes of 2008-2027

Updated August 3, 2025

Operating Request

The Kentucky Mesonet at WKU



WKU

Capital Request

Asset Preservation Funding

Capital Request

A New Home for Potter College of Arts & Letters

- WKU is seeking **$280,000,000** to construct a new home for Potter College of Arts & Letters to modernize facilities, support innovation and collaboration and strengthen WKU's role as a cultural and economic driver in the region.
- Our current aging building limits instruction, technology integration, accessibility and competitiveness due to our inability to provide students with the resources they want and need, such as modern studios, makerspaces, production labs and smart classrooms that support applied, interdisciplinary education.

Capital Request

Partnership Through Innovation

WKU

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