

Workshop Session – September 17, 2019

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Tuesday, September 17, 2019 for their regular workshop session in the Graham County Community Building located at 196 Knight Street Robbinsville, NC. All board was present.

1. Chairman Wiggins called the workshop session to order.
2. Chairman Wiggins asks Dr. Arthur Salido, Executive Director of Community and Economic Engagement and Innovation with Western Carolina University (WCU) to speak.
3. Dr. Salido thanked the board for their time and wanted to give the board an update on the engagement activities that are taking place at Western Carolina University. Dr. Salido stated that they have a new chancellor, Dr. Kelli R. Brown. Dr. Salido stated that Dr. Brown has a neat background with Dentistry and Public Health and has a great perspective in the organization of the campus projects with the community. Dr. Salido stated that Dr. Brown is very down to earth and the type of leader that WCU needs. Dr. Salido stated that there would be a welcome tour for our new chancellor next month.
4. Dr. Salido stated that WCU had a record enrollment, which surpassed 12,000 students, and housing is a big issue.
5. Dr. Salido stated that for the month of September they are focusing on Substance Use Awareness and will be having talks on campus and a Town meeting on October 3 with US Senator Shelley Moore Capito and Congressman Mark Meadows who will talk on substance abuse.
6. Dr. Salido stated that NC Promise has been a great benefit to WCU and students. NC Promise is a Tuition Plan that will provide needed funding for WCU and students.
7. Dr. Salido stated that they do have several construction projects and the four main projects on campus are the Steam Plant – Energy Facility; Proposed replacements for Scott, Walker Residence Halls, a parking deck at the old baseball field and renovation of Moore Hall. The Scott and Walker buildings do not have air conditioning and feature design elements are not popular with today's students. The plan is to place (3) new residence hall structures around the Central Plaza and fountain, which will have 932, beds with a cost of \$70 million. Dr. Salido stated that the bidding would go out next month with construction in the spring with a completion date of January 2021.
8. Dr. Salido stated that he has heard about the recent projects in Graham County and thanked Manager Garland and EDC Director Sophia Paulos for the opportunities for WCU students to work on these projects, which included the Salary Pay Plan Study for the County, the Graham County Personnel Policy and currently a Master Recreation Plan. Dr. Salido stated that this gives the students a chance to learn and work on real projects and he is happy to engage with our partners.
9. Dr. Salido stated that the second annual Outdoor Economy Conference is growing in size and scope this year, with representatives from WCU and the regional Growing Outdoors Partnership expecting participation to double to (500) attendees for the event coming up at Crowne Plaza Resort in Asheville on Thursday, October 10. Dr. Salido stated that with the expansion they hope there is enough interest to have an East Coast Outdoor Conference every year. Dr. Salido stated that our western counties has a lot of outdoor recreation with our Cherokee Reservation, Joyce Kilmer and more.
10. Dr. Salido stated that WCU students were given a project to develop a way to use broken carbon fiber fishing rods and the students had two days to come up with a solution. Dr. Salido stated that they development a dart gun that would allow the fisherman that was in a brushy area to blow the bait instead of casting. Dr. Salido stated that WCU would host a "Growing Partnerships with Outdoor Tourism and Local Communities" conference in Cherokee, NC.
11. Chairman Wiggins stated that he appreciated Dr. Salido, faculty and students who helped with the pay plan and the personnel policy and it was done timely and was very much needed.
12. Chairman Wiggins stated that he has seen our sales tax increase due to outdoor recreation and has seen more people come to our area for recreational activities.
13. Dr. Salido stated that during the conference over (12) states will be represented and hopefully they will love WNC and want to move their business here.

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Dale Wiggins, Chairman, Graham County Board of Commissioners

Lynn Cody, Vice-Chairman, Graham County Board of Commissioners

Keith Eller, Member, Graham County Board of Commissioners

Jacob Nelms, Member, Graham County Board of Commissioners

Connie Orr, Member, Graham County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:

Kim Crisp, Clerk to the Board