Budget Update
The Board of Governors will make the final decision on allocations of funding and cuts at its meeting next week. The System is recommending that WCU receive its full enrollment growth funding based on our having achieved our enrollment growth targets a year ago. We will also be allocated cuts in the process, but the proposed scenario is about as good an outcome as we could have expected. Assuming that the Board of Governors endorses the proposal, we will be in a position in early November to make – finally – budget decisions for this year.

As I noted at the September Faculty Senate meeting, we will not receive enrollment growth funding next year because we did not achieve our enrollment targets this year. In addition, we will also have to give back part of this year’s enrollment growth funding. Thus the amount of recurring funding available for distribution this year is much less than we had hoped in the spring during our budget hearings. I anticipate that we will undertake a small, one-time budget cut this academic year to allow the university to accommodate several, strategic, one-time investments which can improve enrollment performance next year.

The bottom line is this: enrollment growth equals additional university revenues, and I fully anticipate that, with the strategic commitment of our university community, we will begin to grow our enrollment again next fall.

Leadership Summit
WCU hosted a Leadership Summit on campus on October 2-3, a meeting which brought together all volunteer leaders from the institution’s various boards and advisory councils to engage in in-depth discussions about the institution’s impending comprehensive fundraising campaign. The summit provided us with an opportunity to make our campaign case to these volunteer leaders, knowing that they will have leadership roles to play in the campaign itself. In addition, we used the opportunity to introduce them to representative students, faculty, and staff from across the university so that the campaign would take on a more personal feel. This campaign is not about the university as a corporate organization but rather about individuals and our mission to change lives. Finally, the boards and advisory councils met separately to begin discussions about their engagement and leadership in the campaign.

The Leadership Summit was wonderfully successful. Our dedicated volunteer leaders left inspired and on fire to help our university achieve its campaign goals in support of students through endowed scholarships, and a number have already made personal financial commitments to establish or enhance their own scholarships. The success of the Summit is due to the efforts of a small army of people, but I am particularly grateful to Provost Alison Morrison-Shetlar, Chief of Staff Melissa Wargo, Director of Marketing Robin Oliver, Director of Special Events Stacey MacGregor, and Director of Donor Relations Natalie Clark for their outstanding leadership of this effort.

My Priorities
I thought it might be helpful to share a bit about my current top priorities. So, here they are:
• Natural Science Building. The Governor has now signed the legislation passed by the General Assembly which authorizes that the bond package go to the people of NC for a vote on March 15. As you are aware, that bond package includes $110 million for a new natural science building for WCU, a facility which is critical to WCU’s ability to increase the number of students it graduates in high-demand disciplines which are critical to economic and community development in Western NC. In coordination with the UNC System, WCU will work hard to educate voters about the bond package and the impact it can have, and I will spend a great deal of time in various forums to help make the case.

• Elected Officials. Now that the General Assembly’s long session has concluded, we are in a 6-month interim period before the short session begins next April. It is actually easier to make meaningful contact with legislators to build relationships and discuss priorities during interim periods between sessions than it is in the midst of sessions during which they are lobbied at all turns by a wide variety of interests. Thus, I will spend energy in the coming months hosting legislators in Cullowhee and at Biltmore Park and visiting with them in their home districts.

• Fundraising. I will spend an increasing amount of my time visiting with donors and prospective donors, making the case on an individual basis for their philanthropic investment in our university, with a primary focus on endowed scholarships.

• Enrollment. As I have expressed in a variety of forums, enrollment growth is critical to Western Carolina University and its financial picture. We have good, smart people across this university who are owning this issue and playing their individual roles to make a difference. My personal role is to ensure that this issue consistently enjoys front-burner status.

• Onboarding New System President. The UNC Board of Governors will elect a new UNC System President on Friday of this week. In the coming months, the System as a whole and each of the 17 constituent institutions will undertake an onboarding process to assist the President in getting quickly up to speed. I will work with a number of folk on campus and with System personnel to provide an early introduction to WCU for our new President.

Thank you for all you do in making Western Carolina University the thriving institution it is in service to our students, our region, and our state. Happy Homecoming!

Sincerely yours,
David Belcher
Chancellor