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WKU marks passing of ardent donor, Pete Mahurin

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Pete Mahurin

Submitted

Pete Mahurin – a longtime supporter of Western Kentucky University, champion of gifted education and a namesake of the university’s Honors College – died Wednesday. He was 83.

“Kacy and I are saddened to learn of the passing of Pete Mahurin,” WKU President Timothy Caboni said in a news release Thursday, which credited Mahurin’s death to a recent illness. “Pete and his wife, Dixie, have been among the most generous and loyal supporters in WKU’s history, and their contributions have provided countless opportunities for our students, faculty and staff. Our thoughts are with Dixie, their daughter, Sarah, and the rest of the Mahurin family.”

Among the university's most generous donors, the Mahurins' support is credited with transforming WKU into a destination for gifted studies. A gift in 2002 created an endowed professorship in gifted studies – at the time one of the few such professorships for that discipline in the country, WKU said.

Julia Link Roberts, WKU's Mahurin professor for gifted education and the executive director of its Center for Gifted Studies and Gatton Academy, described Pete Mahurin as her mentor and friend – someone who opened doors for her and the center.

“He offered wisdom, encouragement and support,” Roberts told the Daily News on Thursday, adding she hopes he will be remembered for the kindness and respect he showed to others.

“I have been honored to be the Mahurin Endowed Professor of Gifted Studies for almost 20 years and to have had Pete on our advisory board since it began,” Roberts said in a news release. “He will be sorely missed by so many.”

Much of the financier and businessman's support for gifted studies at WKU can be credited to his daughter, Sarah Jo, who attended the Center for Gifted Studies enrichment programs as a student and is now the dean of the Timothy Dwight College at Yale University – the first woman to hold that role at the university.

As an organizer and founding member of the WKU Foundation Board of Trustees, Mahurin served eight years on the Board – including four as its chair, the university said. Mahurin also served on the Campaign Cabinet for both of WKU's capital campaigns.



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Professionally, Mahurin was a director and financial advisor for Baird Private Wealth Management in

Bowling Green. As a student at WKU, he was a member of the football and basketball cheerleaders and earned a bachelor's degree in chemistry in 1961. Mahurin joined Hilliard Lyons more than 50 years ago and served on the board of HL Financial Services, Hilliard Lyons' parent company before the firm merged with Baird in 2019. He was listed among Hilliard Lyons' top wealth advisers every year since 1972, having been the top wealth adviser for nine of those years, WKU said.

In 2010, Pete and Dixie Mahurin made a gift to facilitate the move of the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children to WKU. WKU recognized the couple as the university's Philanthropists of the Year in 2011, and in 2017, WKU's Board of Regents named the Mahurin Honors College in their honor.

Craig Cobane – executive director of the Mahurin Honors College and WKU's John and Jacque Jarve Endowed Professor of Honors – told the Daily News on Thursday that the

Mahurins' support "has been transformational" for countless students.

Their contributions have supported not just student scholarships, but also grants for study abroad programs and students' appearances at research conferences, among other opportunities, Cobane said.

On a more personal front, Cobane described Pete Mahurin as a mentor who offered sage counsel and a "wickedly funny sense of humor."

His engagement with students went beyond simply writing checks, Cobane said, adding that Mahurin often responded and followed up with students who wrote him thank you notes for supporting their research or other projects. He took an interest in their story and who they were as people, Cobane said.

"There's a hole in a lot of people's lives" right now, Cobane said of Mahurin's death.

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