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Caboni eager to host famous oceanographer for public event

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Robert Ballard

Provided by WKU News

MORE INFORMATION



Famed oceanographer to speak at WKU

Western Kentucky University President Timothy Caboni is as eager as anyone to get the Presidential Speaker Series started.

The series, which will first invite famed oceanographer Robert Ballard to campus on Oct. 10, seeks to attract

a wide range of well-known experts spanning various disciplines.

Caboni said the idea for a series came in the wake of COVID-19 as a way to reignite the community through unique learning opportunities.

“For our students, (it is) creating opportunities for them to engage with brilliant, interesting people, beyond the folks that we have here, with a national reputation,” Caboni told the Daily News. “And also, really, to create opportunities for the larger Bowling Green and Warren County community to come on campus and spend time listening to someone with a fascinating, amazing life.”

Ballard certainly fits the bill for an amazing life.

Known best for his discovery of the RMS Titanic wreckage, his career exploring the depths spans over half a century. He also found the wreckage of the German battleship Bismarck, the aircraft carrier USS Yorktown, John F. Kennedy’s PT-109 and the first hydrothermal vents in the Galapagos Rift in 1977.

Caboni said they were interested in bringing Ballard even before an Oceangate submarine in June suffered a catastrophic implosion that claimed the lives of its inhabitants while exploring the Titanic's resting place.

Ballard's experience "marries both research and adventure," which Caboni said was the real draw of having him speak. He said guests like this have a chance to elevate the university's perception both among students and nationally — "a special climate" for campus.

The excitement goes both ways, he said, as Ballard seems eager to engage with students and visitors during his visit.

"I think the entire community is going to really enjoy interacting with him," Caboni said. "I wouldn't be surprised to see him strolling around campus or popping into classrooms."

Ballard's speech, "Deep Sea Exploration: Past, Present, and Future," will be held at Van Meter

Auditorium at 7 p.m. Attendance is free, but seating is first come, first serve.

Caboni said following the event, they'll begin taking community feedback and suggestions online for the next speaker, which he hopes will visit in the spring.

Anyone with a rich experience — and an available schedule — is on the table, Caboni said. They hope to find experts in economics, public policy, history, science and more.

“(These are) opportunities to come together as an academic community, to celebrate that we’re not just about all the other things we do,” Caboni said. “At the core of who we are, it’s academic and intellectual engagement around interesting topics, and I want us to celebrate that as a university.”

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