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VIEWS & VISIONS

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E. Gordon Gee
West Virginia University

Dr. E. Gordon Gee is the President of West Virginia University. He is a Member of the Center for Economic Development Task Force on Building a More Civil and Just Society and an inaugural member of the Education Advisory Board Presidents Advisory Council.



Brad D. Smith
Marshall University

Brad D. Smith was named President of Marshall University in 2021. Prior to this new role, Smith served for 11 years as the Chief Executive Officer of Intuit. With his wife, he co-founded the Wing 2 Wing Foundation to advance education and entrepreneurship in Appalachia.

The State of Opportunity

With the hard work of our state leaders, West Virginia is earning a new image – the state of opportunity. From Nucor to GreenPower and Form Energy, we are diversifying our economy, tapping into the strengths of our skilled workforce, and growing our available jobs. As the presidents of the two largest universities in the Mountain State, we could not be more optimistic about our state’s next chapter – a chapter that has been carefully molded over the past decade as our state has become more economically competitive, adopting policies that have built pathways to prosperity for West Virginia families and helped our businesses thrive.

Both Marshall University and West Virginia University are committed and invested in our state, and it is this common thread that identifies our institutions’ individual goals and our shared vision for the future. Over the years, West Virginia University and Marshall



for them that we are tackling projects together that will sustain the momentum and encourage the next generation to choose West Virginia.

Deferred Maintenance

The safety of our students, faculty, and staff is our number one priority, and that is why deferred maintenance is so critical to our campuses. Our teams worked together to show the importance of investing to keep our campuses operating safely, efficiently,

“An investment in higher education is an investment in our state’s workforce, our state’s economy, and our state’s communities.”

have partnered on projects, but we agreed that something feels different now. This partnership is truly authentic. We are backed by momentum. Our teams are eagerly leaning in. Our “why” is our students, and they are our shared purpose and the main reason we focus on providing solutions to our state’s top challenges, while also embracing our state’s unique opportunities. It is our students that push us forward – to new heights with higher expectations. They expect and deserve more opportunities to stay in West Virginia. So, it is

and cost effectively. The West Virginia Legislature dedicated \$280+ million to deferred maintenance for higher education and corrections, and we sincerely appreciate their leadership on this important issue.

Choose West Virginia Tour

Our institutions have teamed up with state leaders to share this new vision of West Virginia. We have visited Silicon Valley, New York, Washington, D.C., and Charlotte, with planned trips to Seattle, Los Angeles,

Houston, and Boston, connecting with alumni and global businesses, explaining “Why West Virginia?” and “Why now?” Our goal is simple – encouraging others to consider West Virginia when making new investments. Learn more about this at www.choosewv.com.

First Ascent

With more than 60 percent of our graduates leaving the state, we believe that our institutions must stop this export of top talent. Marshall and West Virginia University teams are building a remote worker program for students, aimed at keeping our young professionals in the state. This project addresses the state’s brain drain, population loss, and talent attraction challenges. Leveraging the foundation of the Ascend WV remote worker program, the program’s goal is to keep 1,000+ students who can live, work, and play in the state.

WV Grant Resource Centers

Marshall University, in full partnership with West Virginia University, applied and received an Appalachian POWER grant to build grant-writing capacity across West Virginia’s 55 counties to capture more federal and private grant dollars. We thank the Legislature for passing a \$500,000 match to this federal award, allowing us to build out the team of grant writers. In fact, we already have 30 clients receiving research, writing, and editing technical assistance for their projects. This innovative project shares administration positions between the two universities to better ensure a team mentality, and we will jointly offer a grant certification program to grow our own bench of grant writers in our communities. Learn more at www.wvgrantcenters.com.

Brownfields Centers

Both of our institutions operate centers that help revitalize hundreds of industrial sites, giving them a second life for development. Our centers are equipped with experts to help our smallest communities reimagine their economic footprint, helping our communities find their niche and thrive. Simply put, this is real economic development at the local level.

Nuclear and Emerging Technologies

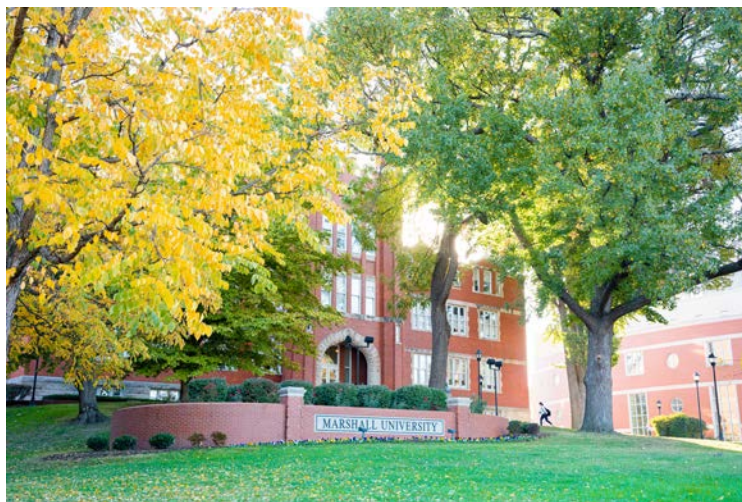
West Virginia has long prided itself on being an energy leader. To help position the state for a strong energy future, the Legislature passed a resolution encouraging Marshall and West Virginia University to lead an education consortium made of industry and educational leaders to develop policies and programs necessary to facilitate nuclear energy developments.

Quality Healthcare

We are teaming up to offer quality, accessible healthcare for West Virginians. We each have focus areas to avoid

redundancies, and our teams are working together to bring comprehensive, expertise care to Appalachia.

While these projects just scratch the surface of our collaboration, they do show the depth and breadth of our commitment to better our communities, improve the quality of life for our students and state residents, and embody the best of the Mountaineer spirit – to genuinely care and to unwaveringly serve.



It is through these projects, our research capabilities, and each institution’s individual strengths that our universities serve as economic engines for West Virginia. After all, it is on our campuses where you will meet our state’s next nurses, doctors, teachers, and entrepreneurs. An investment in higher education is an investment in our state’s workforce, our state’s economy, and our state’s communities. Let us continue to invest in future generations. By working together, we encourage young people to choose West Virginia as their forever home, growing and strengthening our state for generations to come. **W**