



WEST LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

Office of Communications
201 Shaw Hall
PO Box 295
West Liberty, WV 26074

Reid Amos, Executive Director
Office: (304) 336-8488
Mobile: (304) 280-6333
ramos@westliberty.edu

August 6, 2009

NEWS RELEASE

West Liberty University to Close SMART Center “Handle on Science” Program to Continue

CONTACT: Reid S. Amos, Director of Communications (304) 336-8488

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

After six consecutive years of significant operating losses, West Liberty University officials have deemed it necessary to cease operation of the SMART Center in Warwood. Operations will conclude in advance of the official closure of the facility August 31.

The SMART Center has had average operating costs that more than double the average supporting revenues since 2004. Additionally, program revenues fell nearly 25 percent from fiscal year 2008 to 2009.

Maintaining the SMART Center would have led to a projected operational deficit of as much as \$135,000 in the next year.

"West Liberty University's mission is to provide a high-quality education at an affordable cost. Attempts have been made to cultivate other funding sources, but in the end, no partnerships have emerged for the funding of the SMART Center. These resources will be redirected to support programs that will provide opportunities to West Liberty students, faculty and staff, including supplemental financial support for an emerging Physician Assistant program," said WLU Communications Director Reid Amos.

West Liberty University will continue its partnership with RESA 6 in support of the Handle on Science program. The program will maintain its operation in the facility in Warwood.

"The Handle on Science program is the most important elementary science program in the state. It is the core of the newly adopted State of West Virginia Science program. The test scores in this region have been outstanding," said RESA 6 Executive Director Nick Zervos.

Handle on Science has been a model program in West Virginia for the past decade. Following an initial grant from the National Science Foundation, the program is supported by funds from the five northern panhandle counties, the Benedum Foundation and West Liberty University. "It has been a true partnership," Zervos said.

Amos added, "Current economic conditions have affected all of us to some extent. Budget cuts have become prevalent in school districts throughout our region. As a result, participation in SMART Center programs has dropped significantly, eliminating a primary source of revenue. Unlike Handle on Science, the SMART Center has not become as self-sufficient as was once hoped. Additional sources of funding simply have not become available."

There is one full-time employee of West Liberty at the SMART Center who has been offered other employment within the university.