

# The Parkersburg News and Sentinel

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## Leadership: Benson off to solid start at West Virginia University



(Editorial - Graphic Illustration - MetroCreativeConnection)

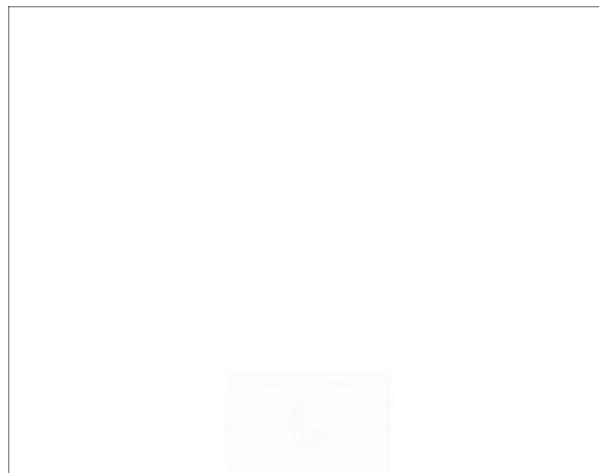
As West Virginia University President E. Gordon Gee winds down his tenure at the helm of the state's flagship institution of higher learning, it is clear incoming President Michael T. Benson does not intend to try to fill those big shoes — he intends to lead WVU wearing his own.

That is important if the university is to build on what Gee accomplished by looking to what is next, rather than what was.

Benson comes across as smart, curious, personable and empathetic. He knows there are challenges awaiting him, but also opportunities — for the school and the state.

As is the case with West Virginia as a whole, WVU will remain a place ALL students can be welcomed and think of as home, Bensons says. They will be supported in pursuing their goals, with the ultimate aim being having a job upon graduation.

For him, that means growing West Virginia's brand, not just the university's; and expanding programs that are working well in some departments to increase job placement for the entire student population.



It's a practical approach, coming from a man who realizes the university

has a responsibility to students AND parents to prepare young people to be productive, responsible and employed. His idea that parents should know their children have a paycheck on the way before the last tuition payment has been made is admirable.

It's big-picture stuff from a man who has already been making phone calls to the parents of potential students on a mission as simple as following up when students have applied and been accepted, but not yet made their deposit.

Once Gordon Gee and his bow ties became beloved figures on WVU's campus, the school's kitchens began churning out signature sugar cookies in the shape of those bow ties. When asked what shape he'd like his own signature cookies to take Benson suggested that, were he to have one, it would be in the shape of the Mountaineer.

It's not about Gee. It's not even about Benson. It's about moving forward as a partner, both to students and the state.

"We're in the beginning," Benson said. "We are kind of in the beginning processes of a strategic plan that I think is gonna be really exciting, that's gonna chart a very, very bold path forward for us."

He appears to be off to a solid start. Students, faculty, staff, alumni and the entire Mountain State are eager to see where that path will lead.

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