In Review
Under the Dome delivers a review of the issues being considered by the 83rd Legislature during its Second Session and provides information on matters that affect WVU and higher education.

Campus Carry
On Friday, House Bill 4298 passed the House Education committee on a voice vote. Provost Joyce McConnell, Vice President Rob Alsop and WVU Police Chief Bob Roberts shared the University’s major concerns with the legislation and answered members’ questions.

There were no amendments or changes taken up by the committee. The bill would still prohibit our Board of Governors, except in three defined instances, from banning individuals with a concealed weapon permit from carrying a concealed weapon on our campuses or in our buildings. Current law authorizes the Board of Governors and administration to make those decisions.

Under the proposed legislation, the only instances in which the Board of Governors could prohibit concealed weapons on campus would be in: (1) a stadium or arena with a capacity of more than 5,000 spectators; (2) a day care facility located on the property of the State institution of higher education; or (3) in the secure area of any building used by a law enforcement agency on the property of the State institution for higher education.

We note that the University could still prohibit anyone who does not have a concealed weapons permit from coming onto campus.

The bill will next be considered by the House Judiciary Committee. Our Government Relations team is engaged with the Legislature on this issue and will continue to advocate for the best interests of the University.

Brumage Named New Drug Control Policy Director
Last Monday, Dr. Michael Brumage, assistant dean for public health practice and service at the WVU School of Public Health, was appointed by Governor Justice as the new director of the state office of Drug Control Policy under the Department of Health and Human Resources.

Brumage has served as executive director of the Kanawha-Charleston Health Department since 2015. In addition to his role with the WVU School of Public Health, he is an assistant clinical professor of medicine in the WVU School of Medicine. Brumage retired as a colonel from the U.S. Army in 2015 after 25 years of service as an internal medicine physician and later as a public health physician.

President Gee and Vice President Marsh joined the Governor, as well as DHHR Secretary Bill Crouch and Public Health Commissioner Dr. Raul Gupta, at the announcement in Charleston.

The Governor’s plan is to target two counties – one in the north and one in the south – that have been devastated by the substance abuse epidemic. The “demonstration projects” aim to stop the flow of drugs, increase treatment for addicts and reduce the number of fatal overdoses. A recent study by WVU’s BBER indicated that 12% of the state’s gross domestic product is dedicated to costs related to the epidemic.
Open Textbooks and Education Resources Study
House Concurrent Resolution 41 was introduced on February 5 by Delegate Joshua Higginbotham. Titled “Establishing the Virtual Library Study Commission,” the resolution aims to address the cost of course materials in higher education and K-12 across the state.

Delegate Higginbotham worked with WVU Student Body President Blake Humphrey and members of the Student Government Association on the textbook affordability study. A bipartisan group of delegates are co-sponsors of the resolution.

Legislative Calendar and Important Dates
Last Day to Introduce Bills in the House February 13, 2018
Undergraduate Research Day at the Capitol February 16, 2018
Last Day to Introduce Bills in the Senate February 19, 2018
WVU and WVU Extension Day at the Capitol February 20, 2018
Bills Due Out of Committee in Chamber of Origin February 25, 2018
Last Day to Consider a Bill on Third Reading February 28, 2018
Last Day of Regular Session March 10, 2018

Bill Tracking
More than 1,500 bills have been introduced at the Capitol this legislative session. Some of the bills that are gaining high-profile attention or relate to WVU and higher education include:

SJR3 – Judicial Budget Oversight Amendment
SJR 9 (HJR 106) – Just Cut Taxes and Win Amendment
SB 83 – Relating to Higher Education Student Success
SB 111 – Enacting Forming Open and Robust University Minds Act
SB 152 (HB 4019) – Budget Bill
SB 269 (HB 4154) – Establishing 2018 Regulatory Reform Package
SB 284 (HB 4267) – Increasing Access to Career Education and Workforce Training
SB 287 (HB 4170) – Creating and Maintaining Centralized State Vehicle Inventory System
SB 330 – Relating to Exemptions from Mandated Immunizations
SB 341 – Creating an Intermediate Court of Appeals
SB 415 (HB 4396) – Permitting Wagering on the Results of Certain Professional or Collegiate Sports or Athletic Events
SB 492 (HB 4390) – Eliminating Certain Special Requirements for DHHR Provisionally Licensed Social Workers
SB 510 (HB 4457) – Designating Hospitals for Stroke Treatment
HJR 103 – Election of West Virginia Board of Education Members Amendment
HB 2335 – Protecting Academic Freedom in Higher Education

For questions or more information, contact Travis Mollohan, director, State and Local Relations, email: tmolloh1@mail.wvu.edu; phone: 304-400-4963
HB 2887 – Relating to Retirement and Separation Incentives
HB 3001 – Abolishing the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission
HB 3045/HB 4344 – Modifying the Tax on Soft Drinks to Only Cover Sugary Drinks/Relating to the Tax on Soft Drinks
HB 4002 – Providing That All Delegates Shall Be Elected from 100 Single Member Districts Following the 2020 U.S. Census
HB 4198 – Adding One Additional Magistrate to Serve Monongalia County
HB 4203 – Campus Free Speech Act
HB 4268 – Co-tenancy Modernization and Majority Protection Act
HB 4298 – Campus Self-Defense Act
HB 4311 – Making All Work Product by State Government to Be in the Public Domain and Not Subject to Copyright Protection
HB 4374 – Independent Evaluation of Revenue Estimates by West Virginia and Marshall Universities’ Business Colleges

To review bills that have been introduced, please visit this link. wvlegislature.gov/Bill_Status/bill_status.cfm

PEIA Public Hearings
Governor Justice has requested that the Public Employees Insurance Agency Finance Board consider changes to the premium structure of its FY19 financial plan. The proposed premium structure for two spouses who are both public employees and covered by PEIA (with one covered as a dependent) would be based on average salary instead of total family income. This means the total of both spouses’ salaries would be added together and divided by two to determine their salary index code. PEIA is holding public hearings February 12-14 in Morgantown, Charleston and Beckley on this issue. http://bit.ly/2EmMKyj

Looking Ahead
On Tuesday, February 20, the State Capitol will be a sea of gold and blue (and 4-H green!) as we welcome more than 500 youth and adults from across the state to WVU and WVU Extension Day at the West Virginia Legislature. This year, our interactive exhibits and staff will encourage these young students to find their path to one of WVU's campuses as well as consider attending a WVU summer camp. Visitors to the Capitol can join the fun and snag a famous flying WV cookie and a selfie with Dr. Gee from 9 a.m. until noon.

WVU at the State Capitol
Travis Mollohan and Rocco Fucillo, both from WVU’s State and Local Relations team, represent WVU at the State Capitol during the legislative session. They can answer questions about any issues addressed by the Legislature. Contact info: Travis Mollohan (tmolloh1@mail.wvu.edu) or Rocco Fucillo (rsfucillo@mail.wvu.edu).

More Information
To learn more about the Legislature, including district maps, bill tracking, committee assignments and a summary of legislative activities, please visit wvlegislature.gov. You may also find contact information for your legislators on that website.

To learn more about WVU’s legislative initiatives, please visit governmentrelations.wvu.edu.

For questions or more information, contact Travis Mollohan, director, State and Local Relations, email: tmolloh1@mail.wvu.edu; phone: 304-400-4963