A Century of Linkages and Synergy: Western Kentucky University and the Mammoth Cave System

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Mammoth Cave System

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still being explored, current length >570 km, total including other nearby caves >800 km
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Became a UNESCO World Heritage Site and International Biosphere Reserve in the 1980’s
Bowling Green, Kentucky, USA
3rd Largest State University
20,000 Students
An education is not all derived from textbooks. All of college life should not be spent in the lecture room or study hall. Class and social activities should find a place in every student's life. The traditions of the institution should be known and studied in their entirety if possible. The alumni of "WESTERN" remember vividly the "Boat Trip," "The Chestnut Hunt," the class activities, etc. The oldest and best known traditional party of the school is the overland camping trip to Mammoth Cave made annually for twenty-eight years. The feature of this trip is that there is time for seeing the natural wonder as well as to enjoy the camp life and swimming, games and jokes that are a part of the trip. Clay Siege will tell the story of his car being stolen even down to the third and fourth generations, Lee Jones will repeat for generations how Lawrence Toomey owes him a shirt. Rhoda Thornberry will never solve the mystery as to how his trousers disappeared and John Kirksey will always declare that the mystery is how so many good eats come for so small a fee. Lucille Towery and Gertrude Elliott will never cease to mourn that the man (?) they caught in their tent turned out to be one of the chaperones.

Sunsets over the forest clad hills, full moon rising in the east, camp fires burning brightly while gathered around is the group—a group of friends and oftentimes more than friends. Five days of camp life fifty feet from the wilderness in sight of civilization, stars overhead at night, nature's wonders before the eyes by day make the party life long friends and leaves an abiding faith in humanity and the Creator that is lasting. THIS IS THE CAVE PARTY.
...because of its accessibility, Mammoth Cave offers many interesting opportunities for Western students who like to study in nature’s own laboratories.
Free Trip to Mammoth Cave!

ALL STUDENTS WHO ENTER THE BOWLING GREEN BUSINESS COLLEGE on the Seventy Dollar Scholarship and pay for same at time of entering, WILL BE GIVEN A FREE TRIP TO MAMMOTH CAVE. We will pay all necessary expenses connected with the trip. We make this offer notwithstanding the fact that the $70.00 scholarship is the lowest rate of tuition ever offered by a school. The different courses included in the $70.00 scholarship would aggregate, at the regular rate of tuition, about $210.00, but we are making you a rate of $70.00, and, at the same time, furnishing free railroad fare, cave fare and hotel fare to and from Mammoth Cave. The Cave is located only a short distance from Bowling Green. Excursions of students make frequent trips to the Cave.

THE SEVENTY DOLLAR SCHOLARSHIP.

We have offered this scholarship to meet a popular demand for a combined Commercial and Literary Course. It gives the holder full right and privilege to all the departments, except type-writing. If he enters on this scholarship he will have the advantages of all the branches taught in the Business and Normal Colleges twelve months. The $70.00 scholarship is the lowest rate of tuition ever offered by a school.

TWO MONTHS' TUITION FREE.

You will notice that the regular rate of tuition for any Commercial Course is FORTY-FIVE DOLLARS for five months, and $55.00 for two courses for five months. This is a very low rate of tuition. However, WE WILL GIVE TWO MONTHS' TUITION FREE to every student who pays for the five months' scholarship at the time of entering. In other words, we will issue a seven months' scholarship instead of a five months' scholarship. This is a great concession on our part, and we know you will consider it as such.
Students from the Potter College for Young Ladies (a precursor to WKU) took annual trips to the cave in early 1900’s.
THE ELEVATOR.

ECHOES FROM MAMMOTH CAVE.

At four o'clock on the morning of June 9, 1910, the rumbling of wagon wheels, the clatter of shoe soles and the cheery echoes of

stopped and sent up a petition for the rain to cease. But the petition was not granted, and it was suggested that Col. Guilliams

would say that it was all because Mr. Turner and Mr. Shaw delayed the departure a few minutes by being late. The girls safely shelled.
party on a camping trip to Mammoth Cave
Western Kentucky State Teachers College expedition to dedicate College Heights Avenue in Mammoth Cave May 1929
a later group from the Bowling Green Business University
Current day interactions:

1980-2005 WKU Center for Cave and Karst Studies Summer Karst Field Studies Program at Mammoth Cave

1981: Karst Geomorphology
Dr. Paul Williams

2005: Cave Ecology
Dr. Horton Hobbs
Current day interactions:

- professional research efforts in hydrogeology, ecology, history, and archeology as collaborations between WKU and NPS scientists
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- WKU graduate program in natural resource management for NPS and other federal agencies
Current day interactions:

course field trips: through introductory geography and geology classes, since 1990 over 3,000 students have visited Mammoth Cave

(All education is not derived from textbooks...)
WKU students, faculty, and alumni are involved in exploring and surveying Mammoth and other nearby caves, and several have been involved in major discoveries. Notable examples include the Martin Ridge Cave System (50+ km) and the recent connection of Hoover Cave to the Mammoth Cave System in early 2005.
Current day interactions:

Kentucky Library and Museum cooperative education efforts through NPS Cost Share Challenge funding
Current day interactions:

Example: public education through website on 1930’s Civilian Conservation Corps work building cave tour infrastructure at Mammoth Cave
Current day interactions:

2004: **Mammoth Cave International Science and Learning Center** established, jointly funded by National Park Service and Western Kentucky University
Acknowlegdements:

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