

**The UK-PURPOSE**  
**(Plan for Unprecedented Research, Purposeful and Optimal Service and Education):**  
**THE STRATEGIC PLAN TO ADVANCE KENTUCKY**  
**2021**

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### **Mission Statement \***

The University of Kentucky is a public, land grant university dedicated to improving people's lives through excellence in education, research and creative work, service and health care. As Kentucky's flagship institution, the University plays a critical leadership role by promoting diversity, inclusion, economic development and human well-being.

The University of Kentucky:

- Facilitates learning, informed by scholarship and research;
- Expands knowledge through research, scholarship and creative activity; and
- Serves a global community by disseminating, sharing and applying knowledge.

The University, as the flagship institution, plays a critical leadership role for the Commonwealth by contributing to the economic development and quality of life within Kentucky's borders and beyond. The University nurtures a diverse community characterized by fairness and equal opportunity.

### **Strategic Vision Statement \*\***

As Kentucky's indispensable institution, we transform the lives of our students and advance the Commonwealth we serve – and beyond – through our teaching and learning, diversity and inclusion, discovery, research and creativity, promotion of health, and deep community engagement.

### **University Values \***

The University of Kentucky is guided by its core values:

- Integrity;
- Excellence;
- Mutual respect and human dignity;
- Diversity and inclusion;
- Academic freedom;
- Personal and institutional responsibility and accountability;
- Shared governance;
- A sense of community;
- Work-life sensitivity;
- Civic engagement; and
- Social responsibility.

\*Mission Statement and Values as expressed in Governing Regulation 1, revised June 11, 2013

\*\* Strategic Vision Statement Adopted by the UK Board of Trustees, October 24, 2015

## **Executive Summary**

### **Strategic Direction: Principles and Objectives**

We were created to advance Kentucky. It's a goal that has guided us through triumph and turmoil, opportunity and obstacles, for more than 155 years. It will – and must be – our north star still in a century already filled with historic challenges. What follows is a summary of the principles foundational to our goal of advancing the state in everything that we do and key goals and objectives that will help ensure our progress.

#### **Five Principles and Key Objectives**

##### **Putting Students First:**

They are why we are here. Whether it is maintaining and enhancing a modern curriculum that prepares all our students for success, providing appropriate support for graduate students or ensuring that doctoral students start and complete their programs successfully, we must put students first.

##### **Key Objectives:**

- Expand on the existing foundation of a focused, intentional, purpose-driven curricular and co/extra-curricular experience with state-wide and global relevance, led and fostered by faculty and staff excellence.
- Further utilize the distinctive attribute of an academic medical center and full range of academic colleges and offerings to further develop efforts to enhance holistic student well-being as part of a comprehensive approach to support for our community, in connection with activities within the principle “Taking Care of Our People.”
- Enhance our smart enrollment plan for the economic growth, workforce and societal development of the Commonwealth — in alignment with CPE’s stated goals around educational attainment — that reflects the diverse, interdependent and complex world our students will enter.
- Enhance and engage in a student-first ethos that inclusively embraces all students (e.g., full-time, part-time, transfer, non-traditional, international, etc.) utilizing an equity mindedness lens.

##### **Taking Care of Our People:**

We will only accomplish our mission of advancing Kentucky when our people — those who work with us and those we serve — are cared for holistically: their health, their safety, their well-being and their ability to prosper.

##### **Key Objectives:**

- Enhance the highest levels of holistic wellness for faculty, staff and students by expanding comprehensive, integrated structures to support working and learning environments where all may flourish and thrive.

- Advance further our transformational culture and environment where students, faculty and staff are enabled and inspired to flourish and thrive by experiencing meaning and engagement in work and learning.
- Create a healthier Kentucky for a more diverse and better prepared workforce for tomorrow, in coordination with “Putting Students First” and “Inspiring Ingenuity” principles.
- Expand and enhance the land-grant engagement mission to include the entire campus community and leverage community-based resources to accelerate health, workforce and economic development across the Commonwealth.

### **Inspiring Ingenuity:**

How do we embed innovation and discovery into every aspect of our institution? The breadth and depth of programming and offerings available on one campus makes us distinctive in higher education. How do we incentivize the spark of ingenuity throughout our campus?

### **Key Objectives:**

- Build upon our strengths in research and creative work to address a broader range of local, national and global challenges, the solutions to which will attract prosperity and well-being to Kentucky and its citizens.
- Advance a culture of innovation in research, teaching and creative work that integrates disciplines and/or fields of study to address local, national and international challenges.
- Promote an agile research and creativity ecosystem that supports impactful, self-sustaining and efficient research addressing present and future challenges facing our local, national and global communities.

### **Ensuring Greater Trust, Transparency and Accountability:**

We are Kentucky’s institution. And that mantle holds with it heightened responsibilities of accountability and transparency. But we need to do more to instill a sense of trust in each other in everything that we do.

### **Key Objectives:**

- To ensure a more responsive institution that can timely adapt when necessary or during challenges, assess language and application of university guidance and policies to better structure and define roles with respect to the bedrock principle of shared governance among faculty, students, staff and administrators.
- Empower effective decision-making at administrative, unit, departmental and college levels by utilizing resource-based budgeting approaches in a transparent fashion necessary to support the university’s mission in alignment with the Strategic Plan and institutional values.
- Strengthen and expand orientation and training across all levels to promote compliance with university standards and processes through programs grounded in UK’s institutional values, goals and objectives.
- Develop additional programs and approaches to engaging, resonant communication with both internal and external audiences.

### **Bringing Together Many People, One Community:**

UK is among the most diverse communities in the Commonwealth. Our students will enter a world riven by divisions, but more interdependent than ever before. How do we model unity amidst diversity for our state?

#### **Key Objectives:**

- To broadly demonstrate and communicate the value of diversity of the UK campus to the Commonwealth of Kentucky and to the global community to create more interaction and involvement between campus and communities on DEI matters.
- Further recruit and retain diverse populations (students, faculty, staff) within all units on campus.
- To create greater and direct partnerships between the university and communities throughout the Commonwealth on DEI-related matters.
- To model and provide a hospitable, safe and inclusive environment acknowledging our past and creating opportunities for the free and open exchange of ideas to all people of the Commonwealth, the United States and the world.

## **Background: Challenge and Progress**

Our mission — over more than 150 years — has never changed.

The north star that guides everything we do at the University of Kentucky must be to advance Kentucky — its economy and its health ... its unique biodiversity and natural resources that match a culture, marked by a rich history of artisans and writers ... and, of course, its levels of educational attainment and critical skills our students need and which are so vital to the Commonwealth's future development.

No other goal rivals this one in its importance. It's why we were created. It's why people continue to invest in us. It's more relevant and necessary now than ever before.

And in recent years, incredible strides have been made to honor that mission.

Graduation and retention rates have reached historic highs. We have done this not by getting smaller, but by growing to record numbers of students, increasing levels of diversity and honoring our commitment to serve Kentuckians first, anchored by nationally heralded efforts to make UK more affordable and accessible.

Our health care system today serves every area of the state and is expanding regionally with advanced care that has been recognized nationally. For six straight years, UK HealthCare has been named the No. 1 hospital in the state, and for three straight years, our Markey Cancer Center has been among the Top 50 in the country.

Our research efforts have accelerated to remarkable levels as well. Total awards have grown from \$331.3 million in FY 2017 to \$468 million in FY 2021. Even more remarkable and significant is the fact that so much of that research focuses — intentionally and strategically — on our Commonwealth's most intractable problems, from cancer and heart disease to deaths of despair from opioid use disorders to ongoing efforts to solve our country's energy challenges. Over the last decade our faculty have won the National Book Award, been named the state's Poet Laureate, authored critically acclaimed novels and appeared on stages in New York and around the globe.

Last year alone, our Department of Athletics won two national championships — in Rifle and Volleyball — and a record 12 Kentucky Wildcats won Olympic medals in Japan. For 18 straight semesters, UK Athletics has surpassed its goal for a cumulative GPA of 3.0 across the department.

We've invested in the people who make this progress possible. As of January 2022, UK will have raised starting salary levels four times in the last six years and overall wages eight out of the last 10 years. When other institutions resorted to largescale layoffs to meet budgetary challenges in the midst of a global pandemic that forced the loss of some 10 million jobs nationally, we found other ways to operate more efficiently and generate the revenues necessary to grow our workforce and further invest in our talent. At the same time, we've transformed our campus, investing more than \$2.8 billion in infrastructure in the last 10 years alone — much of it in classrooms, living spaces and research facilities that support the work of students, scholars and staff.

We have, as a community, demonstrated tremendous resilience and resolve. UK launched incredible community efforts to stem the tide of the COVID-19 virus that has infected more than 200 million people worldwide as of this writing. The institution spearheaded efforts to vaccinate

communities and much of our state, operating the largest vaccination clinic in the Commonwealth, which provided more than 250,000 doses. At its height, more than 4,000 people daily were vaccinated in a makeshift clinic established at Kroger Field – demonstrating a true University-wide effort of UK HealthCare, Athletics, and throughout the campus. Priority was given to schoolteachers and personnel, first responders and health care workers and those with underlying health issues.

The nation's other simultaneous pandemic saw cities and campuses erupt in spasms of protest against racism, the aftershocks of which are still being felt and debated in classrooms, legislatures and school boards across the country. We confronted our own racial reckoning, focusing on the need to create a more diverse, equitable and inclusive community for everyone. An initial, but long-term, campus-wide effort around Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) has engaged more than 500 community members in more than a dozen substantive projects in every corner of our community.

In so many ways, on our campus, with deep connections to the Commonwealth and the world, we are seeking and finding new approaches to meeting our historic mission: to advance Kentucky.

But as we emerge from a time of such furious and tumultuous change — perhaps unlike almost any other period in our history — we are also facing historic skepticism and challenges about who we are and what value we provide. Throughout our community, there has been an understandable and palpable sense that we need to be bold and clear about the path we will chart for ourselves and our state.

The impact on everyone is profound. For example, a student at the University of Kentucky in 2021 may already have spent more than a year learning in a completely remote context. They missed proms and graduations, lived in quarantines and isolation rooms, wore masks and received all their meals on campus through carry-out.

That same student already has seen a global recession that created the deepest economic dislocation since the Great Depression and a global virus shut down a national economy virtually overnight. Those students saw, and participated in, protests over systems and institutions that many believe have fallen short in meeting foundational promises made around the idea of equality of opportunity. And, in many cases, our students and their generation have forced another reckoning with the potential ravages of climate change, a development that large Kentucky companies and signature industries – Ford Motor Company and Diageo — are acknowledging by utilizing more renewable energy sources in production.

Against this backdrop, universities already were experiencing disruptions unlike any in decades — even before other issues and pandemics dominated headlines. From just prior to the Great Recession in 2008 through 2017, as economist Nathan D. Grawe reported, births in the United States fell by more than 500,000. The declines portend a demographic cliff that will potentially impact university enrollments for years to come. Demographics aren't simply destiny. They are our present reality.

In addition, students and families are increasingly skeptical and concerned about the value of higher education. A 2021 national survey of college students found nearly two-thirds of respondents said higher education was not worth the cost — up from 49 percent less than a year earlier. Their concerns? Finding a job after college and paying for their education. Another

recent national survey drives home this point in a compelling way: around four in 10 prospective students say they will choose an institution based on future job or paid internship opportunities.

What do those who will employ our students want from us? As New York Times Columnist Tom Friedman writes, the pace of change and disruption resulting from the COVID pandemic is accelerating and will spare no school or business. Employers, he writes, will want graduates — who can expect to change not only jobs, but careers, multiple times — who are not simply “problem solvers” but “problem-finders,” a term attributed to entrepreneur Ravi Kumar — “people with diverse interests — art, literature, science, anthropology — who can identify things that people want before people even know they want them.”

To this end, our competition hasn’t stood still, either. It’s moving and changing. And much of that competition comes from new places and new sources with deep pockets and strong financial incentives to compete with us.

The health care giant, Kaiser Permanente, formed the Tyson School of Medicine. With an inaugural class of 50 students, the plan is to offer free tuition to the first five entering classes, according to a recent report.

The technology behemoth, Google, has provided nearly free digital skills training across the country. In only three years, the tech giant has trained more than 4 million Americans, offering certificates in areas such as IT, project management, data analytics and user experience (UX) design.

We have learned in the last year that we can’t control everything. We can’t determine who our competitors are, how much money we will receive in state support for our efforts, where the next pandemic will start or how long it will last.

But the need for globally connected institutions of higher education — particularly those tied to their communities and states like the University of Kentucky — has never been greater. Journalist and author George Packer, in a book on the divisions in America, wrote that our country “has had great movements for justice in the past and badly needs one now. But in order to work, it has to throw its arms out wide. It has to tell a story in which most of us can see ourselves, and start on a path that most of us want to follow.” He noted that this task has been complicated by the country’s failure in recent decades, “to sustain and enlarge the middle-class democracy of the postwar years.”

Universities and the education they provide have long been looked to as great equalizers of opportunity for more Americans, regardless of background or race, perspective or identity, to garner the skills they need to transform and succeed. Many are skeptical about whether we still play that role.

What do we bring to this moment of change and challenge? What kind of collective community effort can we marshal and sustain to find new answers to large and looming challenges ahead?

The pages of this Strategic Plan represent our vision for how we Advance Kentucky. We don’t know what the next global crisis will be; we only know that there will be one and we will be called to meet the moment again.

We cannot possibly imagine what new jobs and professions will dominate and change economies; we do know that we must prepare our students to be “problem finders” – lifelong



learners, capable of responding to change and future challenges. Our classrooms and research environments provide the testing grounds where students deepen their knowledge and hone their critical, creative and analytical skills.

Vital to obtaining a first job – as well as the capacity to create a career – these abilities will serve as a foundation for responding to the urgencies facing us locally, nationally and globally.

The pages, then, that follow offer an outline for how we plan to **Advance Kentucky** — today and into the future. A new Strategic Plan – what we are calling **The UK-PURPOSE: The Strategic Plan to Advance Kentucky** — must clearly articulate for our campus, and all those who invest in and care about this place, how we are working to advance Kentucky.

To that end, this plan articulates:

- Five principles that form the foundation of our focus on Advancing Kentucky.
- An initial draft of objectives to gauge and evaluate our progress over time.

Metrics will be developed after review from our Board of Trustees. The five principles included are as follows:

- **Putting Students First (SF)**
- **Taking Care of Our People (OP)**
- **Inspiring Ingenuity (II)**
- **Ensuring Greater Trust, Transparency and Accountability (TTA)**
- **Bringing Together Many People, One Community (PC)**

**As additional introductory notes of importance, the following should be considered:**

- First, this plan has been written by many authors throughout our campus and their thoughtful feedback and suggestions have been included as best possible, with modifications based on feasibility, and compromise where there were differences in opinion. The goal is a plan that is balanced and inclusive and one that is understood as a shared initiative throughout our community.
- This is a “living plan” that will need to be assessed throughout the years and modified as our environment changes.
- Tactics and metrics will be developed in a collaborative manner to best define key measurable outcomes that are aligned with objectives.
- Although each principle area can be perceived as its own “silo,” each has been created given the importance of the area and is meant to cut across all principles. For example, although DEI work is “based in” one principle, it must be applied across all principles.
- This is the Strategic Plan, whereas implementation plans and monitoring will need to follow and be properly resourced, acknowledging the workforce needs to implement.
- As plans are implemented, a collaborative approach will be applied to include appropriate individuals, committees and structures.
- Finally, this Strategic Plan recognizes the extraordinary success already achieved in each area of focus and the success of its many authors (the campus and key stakeholders), and seeks to further build on that success.

## **Putting Students First (SF)**

As an institution, we have made tremendous strides in the last decade in making those words — **Putting Students First** — more than a handy slogan or tagline for an ad. We've embodied that imperative. One of the most compelling ways we manifest that commitment is how we support students — all of them and more of them — in being retained and graduating as we prepare them to lead lives of meaning and purpose. On virtually every dimension of that commitment, we are doing more and being more for our students during their curricular and co-curricular journeys.

Consider a few milestones:

- UK's first-to-second-year undergraduate retention rate in the fall 2020 cohort is 86%, according to preliminary figures, up more than 4% since the fall 2015 cohort alone.
- Similarly, six-year undergraduate graduation rates reached a record 67.8% for the fall 2015 cohort, up more than a full percentage point over the previous year's cohort and up more than 4% since the fall 2010 cohort alone, preliminary figures show.
- UK's preliminary four-year undergraduate graduation rate is 53.9% for the fall 2017 cohort, up more than 20% since the fall 2008 cohort.
- Since the launch of the UK Online initiative in 2018, UK's number of fully online programs has grown by 137.8%. Since summer 2019, the number of online degrees awarded has grown by 110.8%, although much of that growth has been focused in a few key programs, rather than across the enterprise.
- The institution created a nationally recognized scholarship program — UK LEADS — that specifically addresses unmet financial need — one of the largest barriers to student success. Using big data in new and more targeted ways, UK reduced overall debt levels among students.
- In the last four years, tuition and mandatory fee increases have been held to 1.7 percent, below the national rate of inflation.
- UK improved student success rates — and addressed financial need — even as the institution grew over the last decade to more than 31,000 students and continued its commitment to increasing levels of diversity and educating Kentuckians first.
- In its Strategic Plan — Stronger by Degrees — the state Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) reported that the University of Kentucky is the only institution in the state to have increased its enrollment over the last eight years.
- UK extended its mission of service throughout the state by expanding programs of academic excellence that also directly impact the state's workforce needs. Preliminary data for fall 2021, for example, showed an almost 10% increase in the number of graduate and professional students in the UK community. The university opened four-year medical campuses in two communities — Northern Kentucky and Bowling Green — as part of an effort to educate and place more needed primary care and specialty physicians throughout the state. And, in direct response to social and mental health needs in the state, online social work programs were launched, increasing student enrollment in these critical areas by 1,354%.

Now, though, we must strengthen and sustain this commitment to meet new challenges associated with a changing economy and world that require an even more sophisticated toolkit of skills and broad knowledge. Our students will navigate those dynamic workplaces and spaces, cultures and societies, while also needing even more resilience and resolve as they enter and compete in a world that appears more deeply divided than ever before.

## **Narrative Basis:**

Simply stated, *student success* is our collective objective. At the University of Kentucky, we aim to further grow an **ethos** that puts students and their educational experience at the forefront of everything we do. Students do not experience their education as a collection of discrete, siloed experiences. Rather, they experience one University of Kentucky. And as such, we must offer an integrated educational process that is defined as a holistic student experience — where the student and their academic journey, whether undergraduate, graduate or professional, is the centerpiece, surrounded by a scaffolding of student services and a culture of supportive faculty, staff, alumni and fellow students.

## **Key Objectives:**

**Objective 1 (SF1):** Expand on the existing foundation of a focused, intentional, purpose-driven curricular and co/extra-curricular experience with state-wide and global relevance, led and fostered by faculty and staff excellence.

**Objective 2 (SF2):** Further utilize the distinctive attribute of an academic medical center and full range of academic colleges and offerings to further develop efforts to enhance holistic student well-being as part of a comprehensive approach to support for our community, in connection with activities within the principle “Taking Care of Our People.”

**Objective 3 (SF3):** Enhance our smart enrollment plan for the economic growth, workforce and societal development of the Commonwealth — in alignment with CPE’s stated goals around educational attainment — that reflects the diverse, interdependent and complex world our students will enter.

**Objective 4 (SF4):** Enhance and engage in a student-first ethos that inclusively embraces all students (e.g., full-time, part-time, transfer, non-traditional, international, etc.) utilizing an equity mindedness lens.

## **Taking Care of Our People (OP)**

We are Kentucky’s institution. Our history as a land-grant university is rooted in service to the Commonwealth, and our campus finds new and creative ways to embrace our call to serve all people. Our people are both those who comprise this special community and those who we serve as we aspire to advance Kentucky through education, research, service and care. That has always been our mission and in recent years we’ve expanded that idea to serve and provide health care to every corner of the state, while investing more in the compensation and support of our community.

Progress of note includes:

- UK HealthCare now treats more than 40,000 patients each year, up from less than 20,000 only 15 years ago.
- The UK HealthCare system has been named the top hospital in the state six years in a row and multiple specialty areas have been ranked nationally. Our Markey Cancer Center has been a Top 50 center, according to US News & World Report, for three straight years.

- Cutting edge research in medicine and health related areas of focus have increased with a steep trajectory as evidenced by a doubling in National Institutes of Health (NIH) funding over the last five years.
- Strategic alliances have expanded the web of care across the state to communities that traditionally lacked access to advanced, subspecialty procedures.
- The creation of the Vice President for Land-grant Engagement underscores our rootedness in and on behalf of Kentucky.
- A physical presence in all 120 Kentucky counties through the Cooperative Extension system allows our people to live, work and serve in communities across the state.
- Cooperative Extension and the Community and Economic Development Initiative of Kentucky completed a community-based needs assessment, garnering invaluable information about what Kentucky communities see as significant and pressing needs, including mental health, substance abuse and economic development.
- On our campus, compensation has been increased for our employees eight out of the last 10 years, unprecedented investments in people and talent.
- Particular focus has been made on employees at the lower end of the institution's wage scale. Four times in the last six years, starting wages have been increased, leading the region.
- The university has repeatedly been named a **Great College to Work For**, reflecting a commitment to a rewarding work-life environment.

Advancing Kentucky means ensuring a healthy Kentucky in every aspect of the word health – economically, physically, socially and in terms of well-being. In an era of significantly constrained resources, our university must also continue to be innovative and resourceful in finding ways to invest in, and support, our community members so they can continue the work of advancing our state.

### **Narrative Basis:**

Leading a healthier Kentucky will require bold steps in addressing every facet of our campus and our Commonwealth. We do this first as a UK community focused on the holistic well-being of our people, ensuring each person has the choice of benefits, in an environment designed to allow for the ease of making the healthy decision. We recognize the opportunity for a person to find meaning and purpose in their work and the effect of this work on each person's well-being. Advancing the health of the Commonwealth rests on not only our outreach to care for people to both prevent and cure illness, but also to contribute considerably to the training and development of Kentucky's workforce and economic progress. This is what it means to be of, for and in community. The health of the Commonwealth and the health of the University of Kentucky are bound together, only in our ability to lead in resourcing and growing our well-being collectively will we truly be "taking care of our people."

### **Key Objectives:**

**Objective 1 (OP1):** Enhance the highest levels of holistic wellness for faculty, staff and students by expanding comprehensive, integrated structures to support working and learning environments where all may flourish and thrive.

**Objective 2 (OP2):** Advance further our transformational culture and environment where students, faculty and staff are enabled and inspired to flourish and thrive by experiencing meaning and engagement in work and learning.

**Objective 3 (OP3):** Create a healthier Kentucky for a more diverse and better prepared workforce for tomorrow, in coordination with “Putting Students First” and “Inspiring Ingenuity” principles.

**Objective 4 (OP4):** Expand and enhance the land-grant engagement mission to include the entire campus community and leverage community-based resources to accelerate health, workforce and economic development across the Commonwealth.

### **Inspiring Ingenuity (II)**

In 2018, UK designated six Research Priority Areas. It was a clarion call to build on existing research excellence and amplify funding potential in areas where our state has the most demonstrated need — cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and obesity, neuroscience, substance use disorders and energy. This linkage between expertise and need has accelerated the university’s ascent as a premier research institution and has further embedded in us the ethos of service so identified with land-grant universities. Underscoring the importance of equity, and to address historic and systemic disparities based on race, the institution designated a seventh Research Priority Area in 2020.

A few milestones include:

- In FY 2017, those priority areas accounted for more than \$150 million in funded research. That’s \$150 million in research targeted at some of the state’s most intractable challenges.
- Two years ago, UK received the single largest grant in its history, a four-year, \$87 million award from the NIH. The goal: reduce opioid-related deaths by 40% in 16 Kentucky counties. The HEALing Communities Study involves more than 20 researchers across nine colleges on campus, a hallmark of work at UK where discoveries and solutions increasingly happen at the intersection and overlapping of disciplines.
- Overall, research awards jumped nine percent — FY 2019 to FY 2020 — from \$429 million to \$468 million, placing UK among the top research institutions in the country.
- As referenced within the principle “Taking Care of Our People,” research growth in medicine and health related areas of focus have increased with a steep trajectory as evidenced by a doubling in NIH funding over the last five years.
- The seventh priority area added last year — UNited In True Racial Equity (UNITE) — is a five-year, \$10 million investment to elevate impactful research on racial equity, working in partnership with Kentucky’s communities of color.
- Sustainability emerged as a major area of emphasis for the university with specific emission reduction goals, an increased emphasis on construction that met Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification standards and greater integration across campus (from UK Healthcare to Athletics) in approaches to environmentally sustainable practices.
- In 2019, the university launched the Smart Campus initiative. As part of this initiative, in partnership with Apple, every degree-seeking, first-time student receives an iPad and accessories to contribute to their learning and development.

Moving forward, this spirit of ingenuity should be part of everything we do. Undergraduates should have the chance for research and co-curricular experiences early in their academic careers. Ingenuity can — and should — extend to how we advise students and help them

explore different academic paths. It should engage students, alumni and businesses in different modalities of learning and offer opportunities for life-long building of skills and competencies.

### **Narrative Basis:**

Higher education is the vehicle to inspire ingenuity. Higher education at the land-grant, flagship Research 1 institution of the Commonwealth of Kentucky has the dedication, means and opportunity to inspire ingenuity not just in our students, but in the lives of Kentucky citizens and the global community through our research and service missions. We must be intentional about creating effective pathways from campus into public venues for our research, teaching, innovation and creative work. To inspire ingenuity, using available resources, we must be strategic, innovative and use one of our strongest UK attributes — the ability to work collaboratively to address complex challenges. In our educational and research mission, we must use convergent approaches that deliberate on problem formulation, use a systems-level perspective and employ flexible but persistent problem-solving skills that become the framework to inspire ingenuity in our students, faculty and staff. The following objectives are put forth to inspire ingenuity.

### **Key Objectives:**

**Objective 1 (II1):** Build upon our strengths in research and creative work to address a broader range of local, national and global challenges, the solutions to which will attract prosperity and well-being to Kentucky and its citizens.

**Objective 2 (II2):** Advance a culture of innovation in research, teaching and creative work that integrates disciplines and/or fields of study to address local, national and international challenges.

**Objective 3 (II3):** Promote an agile research and creativity ecosystem that supports impactful, self-sustaining and efficient research addressing present and future challenges facing our local, national and global communities.

### **Ensuring Greater Trust, Transparency and Accountability (TTA)**

Building trust depends upon a sense of transparency among all of an institution's vested stakeholders and publics and a willingness to be held accountable for both success and shortcomings.

A selection of recent communication efforts to build trust are listed below:

- As a global pandemic dominated our world for much of the last 18 months, UK endeavored to reach out more — and more often — with information that would connect the community and update it on both progress and challenges.
- An online dashboard, updated multiple times a week, provided detailed information for the community and larger public about virus incidence levels, isolation capacity and metrics.
- More than 200 community messages about COVID and the institution's DEI efforts were disseminated to the campus over the last year — a stepped up effort designed to keep the campus connected when so many had to work and learn remotely.

- An increase in bi-directional meetings with elected campus leaders among faculty, staff and students allowed UK to gather input and feedback on critical challenges facing the university.

At the same time, transparency and accountability depend upon not simply one-way or top-down communication. Communication must engage people in dialogue and demonstrate to our stakeholders a commitment to shared governance, based on shared values. UK must extend and expand these efforts around transparency as a way of ensuring accountability to all vested stakeholders and publics. Every unit and every individual on our campus shares responsibility for greater transparency and accountability — from cybersecurity efforts to integrity in research, from minimizing the occurrence of potential conflicts of interest to even greater compliance with standards of ethics and care. All of us share in this responsibility. All of us share in this commitment. It will take all of us, working in partnership, to make it easier to understand these expectations and to live up to them.

### **Narrative Basis:**

As Kentucky's land-grant and flagship university, we have a heightened responsibility to ensure trust — as a core value of our community — and to increase accountability and transparency for everyone who cares about, and invests in, this place. As community members who care about ethics, when we accepted positions at the University of Kentucky, we understood that the people of Kentucky and its partners placed their trust in us. They also gained the right to hold us accountable in meeting the university's goals with integrity and a commitment to transparency. Indeed, the university has enacted multiple highly successful policies in education, research, service and extension, which speak to our commitments around trust, transparency and accountability at every level. Further enhancing and sustaining this culture requires:

- Clear two-way communication with all stakeholders, internally and externally, that allows those audiences most critical to UK to have knowledge of what our standards are and to hold us accountable in meeting them.
- A steadfast commitment to articulating and then aligning principles with strategic objectives, budgets and governance structures and regulations.
- An expanded effort to train current and emerging leaders and support all personnel so that they can help sustain a transparent and accountable culture throughout the institution.
- An enhanced commitment to understanding of, and compliance with, university standards and policies and the multiple governmental compliance requirements we uphold.

### **Key Objectives:**

**Objective 1 (TTA1):** To ensure a more responsive institution that can timely adapt when necessary or during challenges, assess language and application of university guidance and policies to better structure and define roles with respect to the bedrock principle of shared governance among faculty, students, staff and administrators.

**Objective 2 (TTA2):** Empower effective decision-making at administrative, unit, departmental and college levels by utilizing resource-based budgeting approaches in a transparent fashion necessary to support the university's mission in alignment with the Strategic Plan and institutional values.

**Objective 3 (TTA3):** Strengthen and expand orientation and training across all levels to promote compliance with university standards and processes through programs grounded in UK's institutional values, goals and objectives.

**Objective 4 (TTA4):** Develop additional programs and approaches to engaging, resonant communication with both internal and external audiences.

### **Bringing Together Many People, One Community (PC)**

UK has embraced its calling as Kentucky's university by strengthening its commitment, not only to diversity, but to sustaining communities that care deeply about equity and a sense of belonging for everyone.

To that end, the university has never been more diverse, as noted in the milestones below:

- Among public flagship institutions, few universities have a higher percentage of people of color on their campuses than the populations of their states. UK is one of them.
- We are, in fact, more diverse than at any time in our history, with students from more than 100 countries and more than 15% of our student population coming from a community of color.
- Four-year and six-year graduation rates for Black and African-American students have increased by 16% and 14%, respectively, over approximately the last 10 years.
- The university also stepped up to confront the other pandemic afflicting our country in 2020 — a reckoning over questions of the systems and structures that perpetuate inequality and deepen divisions, whether based on race or identity, perspective or background.

In our reckoning with these issues, UK initiated a multi-year, campus-wide DEI effort. More than a dozen projects, involving some 500 community members, worked throughout 2020-2021 on issues aligned with the institution's values:

- The institution established of a DEI Public Art Fund focused on curating and promoting diverse and inclusive art in capital projects.
- UK embarked upon a new campus plan to incentivize more diverse representation in faculty, staff and administrative ranks.
- Added a seventh Research Priority Area related to DEI (UNITE) as part of a greater institutional focus on questions of systemic and structural racism and its impacts. Between FY 2015 and FY 2020, there has been an annual compound growth rate of 16.6% in awarded grants and contracts in the DEI area.
- The institution has tapped a highly regarded expert in the local community to be its first supplier diversity manager as part of a long-term effort to bolster and strengthen ties to minority-owned businesses and vendors.
- UK announced the establishment of the Commonwealth Institute for Black Studies — a multidisciplinary program that will highlight UK's growing research around issues of race and racism.

Creating a culture of belonging for all is not a discrete project. It is an ongoing process, sustained by people committed to being a place where everyone feels as though they belong.



This is not only a response to injustice. It is a commitment to changing culture. That is our task now.

### **Narrative Basis:**

As the land-grant institution of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, UK leads the state in ways more expansive than at its founding as an agricultural and mechanical college in the 19th century. The ideal of advancing the citizenry through education, hard work and innovation remains at the core, yet global and societal changes affect people in even the most rural parts of the state. With one of the most diverse workforces and student bodies in the state, UK provides a microcosm of how a group of diverse people (race, sex, sexual identity, sexual orientation, religion, creed, nationality, cultural background, disability, small town or urban community culture and first-generation context) can evolve in such a way as to bring DEI and positive change to its community and to society at large.

Through its key areas of education, research, health care, arts, culture and economic development, UK will provide both a real-world example and a working framework for moving Kentucky forward in its challenges for today and for tomorrow. Part of that framework must include the original “extension” of knowledge to all 120 counties, through the effective utilization of UK’s Cooperative Extension Service and through the Office of Institutional Diversity (OID).

As an act of civic engagement and by utilizing the considerable institutional resources such as the UK Office of Business Engagement and the Coldstream Research Campus, the university can be a catalyst for growth, workforce stability, worker success and free-market competitiveness for diverse communities and businesses.

We have the opportunity to expand the meaning of the land-grant idea of *commonwealth* by using our extension service as a conduit not only to go out and give but also to *listen* and to *learn*. We can also exhibit *on campus*, our commonality — those things that unite us in a democracy and as a global community. Our unity is our diversity — our mission to be all-inclusive.

### **Key Objectives:**

**Objective 1 (PC1):** To broadly demonstrate and communicate the value of diversity of the UK campus to the Commonwealth of Kentucky and to the global community to create more interaction and involvement between campus and communities on DEI matters.

**Objective 2 (PC2):** Further recruit and retain diverse populations (students, faculty, staff) within all units on campus.

**Objective 3 (PC3):** To create greater and direct partnerships between the university and communities throughout the Commonwealth on DEI-related matters.

**Objective 4 (PC4):** To model and provide a hospitable, safe and inclusive environment acknowledging our past and creating opportunities for the free and open exchange of ideas to all people of the Commonwealth, the United States and the world.