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Chairman, Board of Trustees
October 20, 2023

Members, Board of Trustees:

Accelerate Growth to Do More And Be More for Kentucky

Recommendation: The University of Kentucky was created to advance this state – its health, its economy and its quality of life. In the past decade, through its mission of education, research, service and care, the University has been striving to meet the needs of Kentucky through growth – educating and graduating more students, moving enrollment to record levels, treating and healing the largest number of patients in our history with a continued emphasis on advanced subspecialty care and expanding a research capacity focused on the state’s most significant challenges and opportunities. In fact, the momentum that has occurred in higher education in the Commonwealth over the last decade – in terms of overall degrees, degrees among students of color and from lower-income households – has been fueled and driven by the University of Kentucky.

Yet, at this moment, the state of Kentucky is at an inflection point. Thus, so, too, is the University of Kentucky.

Billions of dollars in economic development opportunities are coming to Kentucky and with them thousands of good-paying, skilled jobs in both urban and rural areas of the state. Key areas throughout the state are growing, developing and leveraging assets such as a skilled and educated workforce, ample land and access to water, rail, roads, air travel, a strong and growing manufacturing base and other key logistics critical to economic health. At UK, hundreds of millions of dollars in research grants and contracts are being strategically aimed at many of the state’s largest health challenges – cancer, heart and vascular disease, opioid misuse, and diabetes, among others.

However, there are significant headwinds, which if not addressed will imperil the state’s clear economic potential. Kentucky has a workforce participation rate that is ranked among the lowest in the nation. A recent report from the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce estimates that the state has up to 100,000 job openings in any given month. And 65 percent to 85 percent of these job openings require training beyond high school. Yet, less than half of Kentuckians have the necessary training and/or credentials to meet the needs of employers, according to the Council of Postsecondary Education (CPE). Therefore, as we continue to increase the number of students who graduate we must link their UK experience to the Commonwealth’s needs. The time is now, we cannot wait, we cannot slow down, we must move and go farther and faster for the Commonwealth and our fellow citizens.

Utilizing UK's Strategic Plan – the UK PURPOSE – as a framework and guide, the Board of Trustees directs the President to focus the University's expansive capacity and commitment on accelerating efforts to advance Kentucky – its economy, the health and welfare of its citizens and its quality of life through a plan that ensures:

More Educated Kentuckians: Continuing strategic and thoughtful enrollment growth, focused on the workforce needs of Kentucky and developing ways through comprehensive planning efforts that align UK's full complement of disciplines, our health and research enterprises and new and strengthened partnerships with schools, government, corporations and industry to incentivize students to live and work in Kentucky following graduation.

More Readiness: Working in a campus-wide initiative through the institution's shared governance structure, the university will assess, evaluate and revise the institution's general education curriculum – the UK Core - with a focus on ensuring students are provided with the skills to succeed in a fast-changing and sophisticated workplace that will require technical competency but also the capacity to engage in critical thinking and constructive dialogue as our graduates must lead companies and communities in the process of forging solutions rather than divisions.

More Partnerships: Expanding the University's impact through partnerships, acquisitions, new initiatives with schools, governments, non-profits, industry and corporations that enhance UK's ability to meet the state's needs through its mission of education, research, service and care.

More Employee Recruitment and Retention: Reviewing how UK takes care of all its people to maximize recruitment and retention of the best and most inclusive employee base while continuing to be responsive to the evolving needs of employees.

More Responsiveness: Reviewing policies, procedures and financing strategies to ensure the institution is aligned with the state's needs. This process will include a review of relationships with the CPE, K-12, government agencies and the private sector as well as the University's Governing and Administrative Regulations to ensure the institution is poised to accelerate its progress and growth.

The Board of Trustees directs the President to move quickly to develop detailed plans in the areas listed above and report regularly to the Board over the course of this academic year with an expectation of significant progress by June 2024.

Action taken: Approved Disapproved Other _____