



A Message from University of Kentucky

PRESIDENT ELI CAPILOUTO



Dear Campus Community,

Nearly a generation ago, in a deep and distinctive voice, Maya Angelou told the gathered inaugural crowd that they stood “on the pulse of this new day.”

She called on the country to face a horizon that “leans forward, offering you space to place new steps of change.”

At the start of a new semester, we know there is still so much before us – both change and challenge.

Health professionals and public policymakers alike remind us that even as we have worked so hard together to manage this virus on our campus, some of the most challenging days of the crisis still may lie ahead over the next couple of months.

And, yet, in recent days, I have been reminded that there is light being cast, too. This community is playing a part in shining it.

Last Tuesday, hundreds of volunteers – from UK HealthCare, our colleges of Pharmacy and Nursing and beyond – began a central COVID-19 vaccination clinic in the Central Bank Field Club at Kroger Field.

Over the next few weeks, at the request of our state, we aim to vaccinate all K-12 teachers and personnel in Fayette County, first responders and emergency workers, regional health providers, older members of our community and those with underlying health conditions. That’s on top of thousands of front-line health workers and providers and members of our campus community who have been vaccinated already thanks to UK HealthCare.

With the support of UK Athletics and our Emergency Operations Center, we can vaccinate thousands of people a day, roughly 260 members of our community an hour.

What other athletics department in the country has responded as ours has – a field hospital in one month, a facility equipped for a safe, physically distanced voting in another and now a massive vaccination clinic?

What other medical center can marshal so many people, in such a short period of time, for such a prolonged period, to extend healing, help and hope?

And what other campus can gather dozens of people to help with technical support, developing overnight call centers and web sites to guide people to the clinic and provide clarity when there are questions?

It is a logistical lift that distinguishes this university and this community at such an important moment for our Commonwealth. And it's why the state has turned to us as an essential resource.

Scrolling through social media feeds, emails and letters to our offices, is like reading a long homily of hope.

"I don't think I've ever been so excited to get a shot," said one educator.

Another wrote to us saying it felt like winning the lottery.

These people are our local heroes, said one email.

This should remind us of what we – as a deeply caring community – can do, when united toward a common purpose with uncommon resolve.

This is an uncommon place – a remarkable place that was created to serve. For more than 150 years, we have lived that mission – in teaching and healing, service and research.

Last Wednesday, a young Amanda Gorman, on a cold and windy day, reminded another inaugural crowd that "even as we hurt, we hoped."

"And yet the dawn is ours before we knew it," Gorman said in a clear and brave voice. "Somehow, we do it. Somehow, we've weathered and witnessed ... A nation that isn't broken, but simply unfinished."

We are a community that, like our country, is perpetually unfinished. We hurt, but yet, still hope.

We confront darkness, but yet, we always try to find ways to shine light – never more so than now, at this moment, when those we serve need us most.

We are there.

Welcome back. I look forward to overcoming the challenges ahead with you as we seek to shine a light – as a community, unified in purpose, united by hope.

Eli Capilouto
President

