



A Message from University of Kentucky

**PRESIDENT ELI CAPILOUTO**



Dear Campus Community,

I spoke to our Board of Trustees this afternoon about our progress – and ongoing effort – toward making our campus a more diverse, equitable and inclusive community.

I wanted to share that progress report with you:

We also are continuing our journey in making our campus a place of acceptance and belonging for our students, faculty, staff and larger community.

At the center of this work is our Office for Institutional Diversity.

Dr. George Wright has been leading our efforts in diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) on an interim basis since June of last year.

He will continue in his role as a senior advisor to me once a permanent Vice President for Institutional Diversity is selected.

The search committee for this position met earlier this week to be charged in their efforts and to launch a national search, led by its co-chairs – Dean of the College of Medicine Dr. Robert DiPaola and Interim Dean of Students Dr. Trisha Clement-Montgomery.

At the same time, we are not resting in our efforts to make this campus more welcoming, accessible and accepting of all people.

Last year, our team came to this board reinvigorated with a plan to respond to social injustices – both past and present – with a plan of progress for this institution toward diversity, equity and inclusion.

Since then, scores of faculty, staff, and students – more than 600 people – have given their most valuable resource – their time and talents – as part of 17 projects in Phase One of the university's DEI plan.

Universities across the country – like communities throughout America – are reckoning with historic and systemic racism and injustice.

We spent time together yesterday, learning to better understand the often-biased lenses through which we view and understand some of these issues.

This institution – like others – has a complex and fraught history with race.

It was only a little more than 70 years ago that we were first integrated, when Lyman T. Johnson forced us to reckon with an at times ugly history.

Our physical spaces and mental places are marked by that history, too – even to this day.

It is up to us to uncover our history and repair that which is not yet whole.

Yes, we have made undeniable progress – educating and graduating more students of color than any other institution in our state.

But stubborn gaps in academic progress remain.

And we must do more to provide greater opportunities for staff and faculty of color to not only join our community, but to be elevated and promoted as well.

How do we reconcile our past with our progress...our significant advances with those matters on which we fall short? That also is part of the collective story of this place.

I think the answer for a university like ours lies in our capacity to do what makes us special.

We are a place always motivated by a continual commitment to reflection and renewal.

We are willing to promote our progress.

We also must be willing to just as readily confront and interrogate those times in our past and our present where our deeds did and do not match our words.

That is what an intellectually vibrant – and essential – institution does.

It reflects so that it might renew – renew our commitments, renew our promises, renew our purpose to be a community where everyone is accepted.

That is how we serve our students and prepare them for a world filled with both challenge and opportunity.

It is in that spirit – the spirit of reflection and renewal – that I am pleased to provide

some highlights of the important work being done under Dr. Wright's leadership.

**This afternoon, I have a progress report on three projects where significant steps forward are being made.**

The Facilities and Finance Workstream has the executive oversight of Dean Mark Shanda from the College of Fine Arts and Dr. Eric Monday.

All three projects are within the workstream they sponsor.

One project – led by Interim Assistant Vice President for Auxiliary Services Andrew Smith and Vice President for Facilities Management Mary Vosevich – is focused on creating a Diversity and Inclusivity Master Plan.

**You can read a release about those efforts [here](#).**

The members are working to identify existing areas of concern on the campus relative to institutional history, art, sculpture and civic landscapes, accessibility and other barriers to inclusion within buildings across the campus.

The plan will inform efforts across the entire campus and complement our existing master plan, which has guided so much of the transformation of our campus – from buildings and transportation routes to additional greenspace and gathering places.

To help facilitate this work, we have embraced best-in-class consulting firm Sasaki – which helped with the creation of our campus master plan several years ago – to engage stakeholders from around the university collaboratively.

The master plan will include a vision that can be implemented for transforming the campus over time to create a more inclusive, equitable and barrier-free environment.

Over the next several months, they will talk with students, faculty and staff to deeply listen and gather ideas for the plan's development. We hope to come forward with a concrete action plan in July.

Complementing that effort is another initiative – the creation of a dedicated Art Fund for Capital projects.

On capital projects over \$1 million, we will automatically create a fund to commission art that manifestly enhances diversity, equity and inclusion on the campus. **You can read more about that plan [here](#).**

To best accomplish the goal of intentional and impactful public art on campus, a team, led by Executive Director of Strategic Policy and Analysis Melody Flowers, will assign the role of "Curator" for UK's public art.

A standing DEI Public Art Committee will provide the board the input and support necessary for a successful university-wide public art initiative.

But our role in diversity and equity must extend beyond our campus community and into the broader community we serve.

Chief Procurement Officer Barry Swanson has led a team, focused on how we increase diversity among the suppliers and others with whom our institution does business.

This is an opportunity to open wider doors to stronger relationships with minority-owned businesses and suppliers.

I am pleased to share that, after a national search, Ms. Marilyn Clark has agreed to join the university as Supplier Diversity Manager – a critical position that will provide the dedicated focus required to build trust and credibility in the community related to procurement.

Ms. Clark, who is deeply respected throughout our community, joins UK after spending more than five years with the Fayette County Schools in a similar role. **You can read an interview with Ms. Clark [here](#).**

It is not possible to share this afternoon the progress made by the hundreds of individuals on the 17 projects – all in advancement of UK's vision for a more diverse, equitable and inclusive campus community. We will be back regularly with more reports.

The work of these individuals and our collective community is not finished.

Much has been done. Still more remains.

Together, we are finding ways anew – in our own time and at this moment – to answer the challenge that we have been called to grapple with:

Bringing the prospect of hope and healing, reckoning and reconciliation, to this generation and to those who will follow.

Eli Capilouto  
President