



A Message from University of Kentucky  
**PRESIDENT ELI CAPILOUTO**

Dear Campus Community,

I have walked miles across our campus this week — in and out of classrooms and dining halls, through our hospital and research spaces, across our immaculately maintained grounds, residence hall courtyards and shared spaces.

You continue to amaze me.

Our students are excited to be back on campus. Dedicated faculty have stepped up to try new approaches, infused with their passion for teaching and learning, healing, service and research. And our staff work around the clock to ensure our campus is accessible and inviting, poised to support the vital work of this community.

Against that backdrop, so much is different in our world right now. Yet, so many of the important things — who we are and what we are called to do — remain the same. I think it is critical that we remain fixed on that mission right now.

It is completely understandable to become lost in, and worried about, the announcements and challenges that confront us and other universities. We have read the reports in recent days of major universities in Michigan, Indiana and North Carolina that have moved completely to remote learning. What our sister institutions do should inform how we think about our work, particularly as we examine best practices for ensuring the health, safety and well-being of our campus community. At the same time, every campus is different. Every state has different issues, and every community confronts different challenges.

These institutions, I am confident, created good plans, worked them hard and are now making decisions in the best interests of their communities. We are, too.

Every campus has its own story. Let's focus on ours:

- More than 18,000 students have received testing at UK, and the positivity rate remains at approximately 1 percent, much lower than what media reports have reflected at other institutions. We have one of the more robust and rigorous testing programs in the country.
- We have extended that program free of charge to employees; more than 500 have tested over the last week, and the positivity rate is well below 1 percent. And now we are working to expand testing for our community.

- More than 20,000 students completed the online screening tool earlier this week that is distributed each day to our community and that provides us with real-time data about the status of our community. An app we will debut soon will make that even easier.
- Thousands of chairs and furniture have been moved. Hundreds of classes have been reconfigured and transformed. Ballrooms have been converted into learning spaces. Yards and yards of plexiglass and thousands of masks and wellness kits have been distributed.

We all want certitude — one answer that fits every situation or determines every outcome. That's not possible. And it is not how we should operate. We can't eliminate risk, but we can mitigate it.

It is why when I am asked if there is one trigger or threshold for what might cause us to change our plans, I quickly cite a number of interrelated factors we monitor each day, if not each hour:

- Our supply of PPE.
- The number of critical care beds in our hospital to serve both campus and community.
- Positivity rates.
- Our capacity for daily screening and ongoing contact tracing.
- Ability to provide residential experience on our campus.
- Guidance from local, state and federal health and public policy officials.

We won't hesitate to pivot if health dictates a transition. But we also should be driven by our data as well as the counsel of our START team, composed of medical and public health experts, whose recommendations guided our testing program.

We have advantages on our side. Good leadership in our state, I believe, has resulted in Kentucky's incident rate of the virus per capita — and positivity rate — being lower than these other states. Of course, we know those numbers can change quickly in the face of an invisible virus that can traverse a globe, much less a campus, in days and hours.

It can change for us in a moment, too. But we have planned for months for this moment.

Together, we created a comprehensive plan, the product of more than 500 members of our community, including leading physicians, researchers and scientists. We have established a modern, technologically advanced public health system with contact tracers and wellness connectors.

We have prepared. Now, we are executing.

We will have to be nimble. A virus that disregards geography can change plans in a moment's notice. But we have planned for that, too. Our priorities will not change: We will protect the health and safety of our community and put our people first, regardless of cost or obstacle.

In the meantime, let's focus on our mission.

We will continue to be the University of, for and with Kentucky.

I continue to be amazed by what you do, no matter the circumstance or challenge, to honor that timeless and essential mission.

Eli Capilouto