



A Message from University of Kentucky
PRESIDENT ELI CAPILOUTO

Dear Campus Community:

In recent weeks, we have taken a number of substantive steps that demonstrate our commitment toward becoming a more diverse, equitable and inclusive campus community.

We have launched and invested \$10 million in a research alliance around issues of racial disparities and inequities. We have backed with seed money the establishment of the Commonwealth Institute for Black Studies.

Our College of Education has embarked upon a historic partnership with the national NAACP to examine and address issues of educational access. We announced a commitment to anti-racism training this fall, starting with our senior administration.

And, we released details earlier this week regarding a major reorganization of our senior administration—reflecting our diverse campus and world—so that we may better serve our students, build a bigger table for decision-making and increase accountability and transparency in our path to greater excellence and impact.

All represent clear actions; the goal is clear results.

While essential, we know, too, that those steps are only a beginning. There is much more to do in what must be a sustained effort around changing our culture, a culture devoted to anti-racism and dismantling systems and approaches that disenfranchise and marginalize.

Today, I want to announce our next steps in that process, starting with one of the more challenging issues we confront each day on our campus—how to ensure that our free exchange of ideas does not cause anyone to feel unwelcome, marginalized or excluded.

I have asked Professor Scott Bauries, associate dean of research and the Wilbert T. Ham Professor in the Rosenberg College of Law, who is a nationally recognized expert on the First Amendment as applied to universities and who also holds a doctorate in educational leadership and policy, and Danny Murphy, senior assistant dean and chief diversity officer from the Rosenberg College of Law, to be the leaders of a project around this tough issue. The goal is not to restrict the expression of ideas, but to give our community some broad principles so that we can debate those ideas without the power and the harm of certain words. These principles will inform our choice of words and the style of our discourse. Other members of this project team can be found at [this link](#).

That project, one of 17 in Phase I of UK's diversity, equity and inclusion efforts, is part of a workstream—around culture, policies and programming—that will tackle a range of related issues across our campus. Thalethia B. Routt, associate general counsel for the Office of Legal Counsel, and Christian Brady, interim dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and dean of the Lewis Honors College, will serve as the workstream's executive sponsors. In this role, they will facilitate discussions, ensure our project teams have the resources they need to reach their objectives and, along with their respective workstreams, identify projects for Phase II.

We have intentionally chosen these issues to initiate our process. Candidly, as with other institutions across the country, we have grappled for years with the challenge of speech. There is a delicate balance we must navigate:

What does it mean to be an institution in which all ideas are debated and divergent points of view welcomed? At the same time, what happens when language and actions are used to propagate hate that does harm to individuals and is antithetical to our sense of community?

As I have said many times, a University has two essentials—people and ideas. Our discussion of ideas must not alienate or marginalize anyone. Our efforts at inclusion cannot suppress our discussion of ideas. It is possible to do both—and we will.

A team of both legal experts and community-minded members from around the campus will examine these issues, how other institutions are addressing them and options to think in new ways about an age-old but never more relevant challenge: Honoring the exchange of ideas and points of view, while protecting our community and those most at risk.

We recognize the need to move with a sense of urgency even as we know this is not a semester-long or yearlong initiative. We are writing tomorrow's history today.

Against that backdrop, we know that there is no perfect solution or process when imperfect people are involved.

Yet, we can be united in our resolve to be better tomorrow than we are today.

Eli Capilouto
President