

## Fulfilling the Kentucky Promise: Ensuring Student Success

August 10, 2012

Dear Colleagues and Students,

As the first day of the school year draws closer, we're all in the process of preparing for success — success for programs and initiatives we've long labored over ... for our research and teaching efforts ... in the classroom and on the playing field ... and for the university we all serve together.

For the last day-and-a-half, a group of about 60 deans, department chairs, senior administrators and faculty and staff leaders have held a retreat. Together, we are preparing anew for the most important success we can help foster — the success of our students.

And toward that most ambitious of goals, I am confident that we are on the right path.

At this link -- [www.uky.edu/president/august2012retreat](http://www.uky.edu/president/august2012retreat) -- you will find the reports and materials that we utilized over the last two days as a backdrop for our in-depth dialogue and that will help guide the decisions we make. I encourage you to review this rich set of data and background about what's happening in higher education and how we are planning in a thoughtful way for success.

Specifically, we heard reports that depict many of the challenges being faced across the country in providing a creative and engaging undergraduate experience, retaining our students, and helping them lay the foundation for lives of meaning and purpose. Interim Provost Tim Tracy — along with Dean Dan O'Hair and Dean Mark Kornbluh — discussed a task force they are a part of, designed to tackle critical questions and challenges surrounding student success.

We broke into small groups throughout the afternoon and delved more deeply into the questions raised by these reports and sought some consensus on potential strategies for moving forward. This is a work in progress.

Executive Vice President for Health Affairs Mike Karpf and Angie Martin, our Vice President for Financial Operations and Treasurer, provided an overview of UK HealthCare. Their report encapsulated 10 years of tremendous progress that offers compelling lessons for all of us, while also helping us better understand the financial challenges posed by an increasingly tough national health-care climate. And they talked about why making the short-term loans is the right choice for the hospital and the University.

Finally, our campus public safety officials detailed aggressive steps they are taking to help all of us enhance our capacity in that most basic of responsibilities — ensuring everyone's safety and being fully prepared to respond to unforeseen events.

In short, as we discussed throughout our retreat, there are three issues — three critical responsibilities — that will determine our success with students and, thus, as a university: to Recruit, Provide, and Produce.

We must recruit. We aim to be the top choice for Kentucky students and increasingly be the choice in the region. The preliminary numbers for our incoming first-year class — from academic quality to diversity — indicate that we are making important strides in this effort.

We must provide. Providing the best possible undergraduate educational experience is something UK can uniquely do. No university in the state or the region has the full range of liberal arts, professional and science colleges and programs that UK does. A student at UK can walk in any direction for 10 minutes and bump into a world-class scientist, prize-winning writer or outstanding artist.

Now, through a rigorous, interdisciplinary curriculum and a stimulating living and learning environment backed by modern facilities, we must maximize the potential of our students.

Finally, we must produce. There's no other way to say it: Kentucky will not be successful in the 21st century without a highly skilled workforce, a workforce with the ability to create and not just compete for jobs. Kentucky won't get there without UK leading the way. It simply won't happen. Our state has made progress since the 1997 Kentucky higher education reforms. More young men and women are attending college and graduating than ever before.

But others around us are not standing still. Our progress is not occurring rapidly enough or in large enough numbers yet to ensure that Kentucky has a strong, vibrant and sustainable economy in the 21st century.

Our moral imperative to educate, retain and graduate more students is, simply put, a Kentucky imperative. It is the essence of the Kentucky Promise.

And, for UK, there is also a financial imperative.

We can't expect state or federal governments to fund our ambitions.

We must do so — by educating more students, more affordably and with higher quality, we also can help ensure that we have the resources to fuel our founding ambitions as a land-grant, flagship research institution.

As a result, our moral responsibilities and financial needs are actually in alignment.

Now, it is up to us to ensure our success.

We have done so before. I know we will again.

After all, the vision for UK — whether in 1865 at our founding or with the 1997 reforms — has not changed. Then, as now, the idea was that higher education is critical to moving Kentucky forward. And our flagship, land-grant institution of higher learning has a particularly important leadership role to play in that most important of efforts.

That is our vision. That is The Kentucky Promise, which guided our founding nearly 150 years ago. It guides us still as a source of inspiration, but also as a strong admonition that we are only successful when we reach together.

As one thought leader in this area recently put it, the days of command and control are over. Now, success is determined by connecting and collaborating. That means creating an environment where shared values and commitments are discussed openly and transparently, debated cordially and collegially, and ultimately, acted upon thoughtfully and strategically.

I sense every day, in conversations with faculty, staff and students, the unyielding commitment to these goals for our university and the Commonwealth. It is a desire to move forward together, to honor anew The Kentucky Promise that is a beacon for our state.

Thank you for your work and commitment. I am excited about potential for progress that awaits us in the year ahead.

Eli Capilouto  
President