

## Honoring Dr. King's Dream

August 26, 2013

Dear Colleagues and Students,

Fifty years—over half a lifetime. We commemorate the fact that this week — August 28<sup>th</sup> 50 years ago — some 250,000 people converged around the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., to witness first-hand the immortal words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as he described his dream for a better tomorrow for America.

Millions more heard his speech that day from unnamed venues all over the country and around the world. The background for what is now one of the most famous speeches in American history, Dr. King's remarks focused on jobs and freedom, and the impediments of racial division and hatred that kept opportunity unequal and lives divided.

Race relations today are much improved. Remarkable progress in educational attainment and economic empowerment has been made. Much, however, remains to be done. Inequalities still exist in access to health care, education, and in other areas of American life. And those inequalities are not only based on race or skin color, but also involve divisions based on class, poverty and sexual orientation. In our own region of the country, poverty and many health disparities take an inordinate toll on Kentuckians.

So, while the progress is undeniable, there should be no argument that our march continues. As an educational institution, birthed nearly 150 years ago in the still simmering aftermath of a war fought in large measure over slavery, we have a particularly important role to play in that journey.

We were born as a promise — to light a path of progress and prosperity for Kentucky fueled by our mission of education, research and service. For that promise to be real and relevant today, though, it must be extended to everyone, regardless of race, class, creed, sex, religion, or sexual orientation.

Today, our faculty, staff and student body are more diverse than ever. We recognize that our students are entering an interdependent, global economy where geographical and political lines of demarcation are increasingly blurred.

While we are more diverse, the challenge remains as to whether we are more inclusive. Do we, as great institutions of higher learning do, accept not only diversity of ethnic backgrounds, but also diversity of thought and ideas? Do we seek out such diversity and do we truly embrace it?

Preparing our students for lives of leadership, meaning and purpose — in the Commonwealth and around the globe — requires a commitment to such inclusiveness in everything that we do.

This week, our university is convening two broad and wide-ranging conversations that seek to embrace that sense of diversity and inclusiveness throughout our campus.

On Tuesday, August 27, UK will join many institutions around the Commonwealth in commemorating Women's Equality Day. From noon-1:30 p.m., a panel of scholars will engage the

audience in a discussion on the status of women today. The panel discussion will take place in the Marksbury Building auditorium on Rose Street.

On Wednesday, August 28, UK will join millions in commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the March on Washington, which took place on that day in 1963. The campus is invited to stop into the Martin Luther King Center in the Student Center to view the documentary of the March on Washington, which will be shown all afternoon on Tuesday and on Wednesday morning. Then at 2:15-3:45 p.m. Wednesday in the MLK Center, a panel of scholars will engage the audience in a discussion of the implications of the March on Washington, the current state of U.S. efforts to realize Dr. King's dream, and what UK and other institutions can do to advance that realization.

We encourage you to attend these thought-provoking dialogues. They represent the kind of campus we are and what we aspire to be — a place where different ideas and backgrounds are welcome ... a place that recognizes the journey toward the promise undergirding our founding is never complete.

We are always — and we always should be — in a process of transformation and renewal. We are gratified to be on that journey with you at an institution that deeply values that process and the promise it holds.

Eli Capilouto  
President

J.J. Jackson  
Vice President for Institutional Diversity