

We are a Big Blue Nation United

At the end of April, I attended a symposium where 30 students from across five different colleges and six disciplines worked together on proposals for a more sustainable and vibrant campus community. Their research, articulate presentations and engaging testimonies focused on “campus living” and offered creative ideas for improving water and energy usage, mobility and transportation, beautification and student engagement.

The projects were part of the National Science Foundation’s Systems Thinking for Sustainability academic program and provided innovative solutions that could be integrated into our ongoing campus master plan process.

Perhaps most compelling was the type of learning this exercise represents — a modern approach to a collaborative academic experience. The groups reflected a diverse set of disciplines; students conducted independent research and data analysis; and — aligning with our Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), Presentation U, which emphasizes multimodal communication skills — they were required to present their findings and recommendations.

These are the cognitively rigorous, hands-on opportunities we want to provide. They are the experiences our students need and, increasingly, demand and expect. They are looking for technology-rich solutions and learning spaces where they can grow together, intellectually and socially. This style of learning will be the hallmark of a thriving, 21st century university, one that effectively blends the residential model with burgeoning technology that enhances classroom work.

During the spring legislative session, we took a major step toward building that modern campus. Thanks to the support of the governor, scores of legislators, students, faculty, staff, alumni and friends, we launched the Big Blue Nation United campaign, which played a significant role in the success of legislation authorizing UK to self-finance three essential building projects. The legislation, signed by Gov. Beshear into law, includes:

- A \$65 million renovation and expansion of the Gatton College of Business and Economics, which is made possible through the generosity of our donors. The “New Gatton” will include cutting-edge classrooms, multi-use learning spaces, a new Executive-MBA center, and 500-seat auditorium to better serve our students, faculty, staff and business community.
- The second project, a \$100 million Academic Science Building, will accommodate the next century of scientific learning, research and discovery. UK Athletics is funding nearly two-thirds, \$65 million, of this project, perhaps an unprecedented move in American higher education in terms of a partnership between athletics and academics.
- Finally, we will undertake a \$110 million renovation of Commonwealth Stadium and the Nutter Training and Recruiting Center, financed completely by Athletics. As one of a few self-sustaining athletic departments, revenue generated by football and men’s basketball supports 20 varsity programs in the department. At the same time, the depart-

ment provides millions of dollars each year to advance UK’s academic mission. The investments we make today ensure our place as a premier, self-supporting program in the future.

These capital projects, along with our continued public/private partnership to renew and construct our student living/learning spaces, will be integrated into our updated campus Master Plan. The Master Plan — guided by the expertise of internationally renowned planning firm, Sasaki Associates Inc. — is being developed with the recognition that the campus, in its entirety, is more than the mere functional arrangement of buildings, roads, walkways, parking lots and landscapes. It is a community, defined by the collective experiences of our students, faculty, staff, visitors, surrounding neighborhoods and businesses.

The collaborative process has involved some 50 meetings with UK administration; faculty, staff and students; Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government officials; adjacent neighborhood associations; local landlords; business owners; and our area faith community. The overriding considerations that guide the plan include the academic environment, campus life, mobility, growth, community and civic structure. All of the feedback, draft plans and information we have collected and presented are available at www.uky.edu/masterplan.

It has been a busy semester, one that we concluded by celebrating the academic excellence of our students during the 146th university Commencement. We honored the achievement of some 4,300 degree recipients, a total of more than 6,800 degrees conferred over the last academic year. During their tenure at UK, they’ve made a lasting impact and prepared themselves to carry forward our institution’s powerful legacy.

I remain deeply appreciative of your support, and I look forward to seeing many of you at future club programs, sporting events and when you visit a campus that is undergoing an exciting transformation — one that will improve the education of our students and the future growth of our Commonwealth.

Mary Lynne and I greatly value your enthusiasm and desire to “see blue.” with us as we embark on an exciting time in the life of our university.

Sincerely,



Eli Capilouto
President

