



University of
Kentucky

FROM THE DESK OF PRESIDENT
Eli Capilouto

Dear Campus Community,

The issue of food insecurity is a serious challenge – for our campus and for our country.

For several months, members of my senior team and I have been meeting with a group of passionate, committed students about how we can address basic needs on this campus.

We don't all agree on every aspect of how to address these issues. But while we may disagree in some of our specific approaches, we will never disrespect the concerns that have been raised or those who have raised them.

Last night, a group of students began a hunger strike. They say they will remain on the strike until specific steps are taken. We have reached out to them to show our concern for their wellness during this time and to assist them in any way we can.

All of our students – their health, their wellness, and their success – are central to everything that we do. They are why we are here. **To that end, students who have immediate needs can access support by contacting our six full-time employees focused on these issues (four in the Dean of Students office; two in the Student Financial Wellness Center). They are available through the channels listed below:**

- **Visiting the Dean of Student's Office in 513 Patterson Office Tower – a Basic Needs Hub. This Office is staffed from 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. Monday – Friday.**
- **Emailing basicneeds@uky.edu. This account is staffed from 8 a.m. – 8 p.m. every day.**
- **Calling 859-218-NEED. This number is staffed from 8 a.m. – 8 p.m. seven days a week.**

Even as we acknowledge that there is more to do, it is important to underscore the significant work that already has been done to address these issues:

- In fall 2017, Kentucky students who came to this campus from the most challenging economic circumstances paid only \$204 – or less than 5 percent of the cost – for tuition and mandatory fees.

- Since 2015-16, we have increased our annual investment in need-based aid from \$1.6 million to nearly \$9.5 million in 2019-20. The number of students who have received this aid has increased from about 800 to 2,356. A cornerstone of that effort has been the UK LEADS program – a scholarship and grant program that specifically targets unmet financial need for students.
- We also decreased the price of the All Access meal plans – our most popular meal plan – by approximately 13 percent this academic year. That means, under this plan, each entry to a dining hall costs a student less than \$5. We also continue to have student employment opportunities through UK Dining that pay \$10 an hour and include a free meal per four-hour shift.

We have been working to strengthen our existing efforts as well. We have established a single point of contact to provide direction to campus resources. The director of our Community of Concern, Therese Smith, oversees this process and works directly with Student Government. Additional efforts underway include:

- Expanding the hours of the Big Blue Pantry from 20 hours a week to 48 hours a week (10 a.m.- 6 p.m. Monday-Friday, and 10a.m.- 2 p.m. Saturday-Sunday). Those expanded hours will start this weekend. Students can go to bigbluepantry@ukcco.org to make an appointment if they need to access the pantry outside of regular hours of operation.
- Providing approximately 4,000 meal swipes this year, as well as vouchers that can be used at the two residential dining facilities —Champion's Kitchen and The 90. We plan to add more swipes and vouchers for the remainder of the semester. We will not run out; if there is need, it will be met.
- Drawing attention to the Provost Persistence Fund, which provides targeted, one-time grants to students. We also have an emergency fund that has been established to address immediate student needs. We are continuing to raise money for this fund.

These are important steps. But we know there is more to do in the months ahead:

- We are developing a comprehensive website that better coordinates services to address basic needs for our entire campus community. We need to meet students and their concerns where they are.
- Student Government is designating a Director of Health and Wellness to work directly with our Community of Concern to coordinate services.
- We are exploring partnerships to further bolster what we do, including additional support for the Pantry.
- We will begin a survey in April to more fully assess levels of food insecurity and basic needs among students on our campus.

These next steps are a beginning, not an end. This is a journey we are on – as a campus community and as compassionate, caring citizens in a larger world. After all, we share the same goal – a commitment to making progress in ways that

ensure the health and wellness of our students as we prepare them for lives of meaning and purpose.

Eli Capilouto
President

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BUILDING COMMUNITY

