



University of
Kentucky

FROM THE DESK OF PRESIDENT
Eli Capilouto

Dear Colleagues,

“There is us. There is this university.”

Professor Frank Walker’s powerful poetry, “Seedtime in the Commonwealth,” rang especially true this past weekend as we celebrated more than 6,000 degree recipients during the University’s Spring Commencement activities.

Part of the Commencement tradition is the awarding of the University’s highest recognition, the Honorary Degree. Recipients are community, academic, and industry leaders who, in their life’s work, reflect the values of our institution. Among the recipients this Spring was Sara Holroyd, Professor Emeritus of our College of Fine Arts. A child of humble beginnings in the segregated classrooms of Selma, Alabama, Professor Holroyd found her way to the University of Kentucky, and, during her tenure in music education, was one of only two female collegiate choral directors in the United States. After 26 years of service, Professor Holroyd retired in 1987 and embarked on her second career, attending nursing school and becoming a third-shift ER nurse until she retired at 71. Throughout her career, she inspired and mentored students and healed patients through music and medicine. And her story inspired our graduates to lead the crowd in a standing ovation.

For one of our student speakers, Elizabeth Foster, Commencement held special meaning. Her grandfather began his college career at the University of Kentucky. But he put his academic and career goals on hold to serve his country in World War II. He returned to us and earned his degree in our College of Agriculture in 1943. On Sunday, 96-year-old former Navy Lieutenant and UK alum William J. Foster II joined us to watch his granddaughter address her colleagues and celebrate earning her degree from our College of Engineering. Our students again led a standing ovation for Mr. Foster, in grateful recognition of his service.

I was so touched and inspired that our students and their families found such powerful meaning in the stories of Professor Holroyd and Mr. Foster – rising to our feet as one in admiration and celebration. This is the first time in recent memory – and perhaps ever – that there was a standing ovation for an honoree and attendee. Our graduates, our honorary degree recipients, and this special occasion are powerful reminders of the importance of this place and our work.

As the pace of the academic year settles, I want to encourage you to pause and take note of our shared work. The UK family is deeply grateful to you and your effort to ensure our graduates are prepared for the world beyond our campus.

Thank you.

Eli Capilouto
President

see blue.

BUILDING COMMUNITY

