

My First Three Months on the Job

September 29, 2011

In my first three months as President of the University of Kentucky, I've spent a considerable amount of time in dialogue with many of you and in travels across the state. I've heard many of the same themes and sentiments about our university.

A deep appreciation exists regarding the importance of the education, research and service you provide. And all of us -- on campus and throughout the state -- increasingly understand how important our work is in educating our students and preparing them for lives of leadership, meaning and purpose.

But there also is a sense of realism that we live in a dramatically different world than we did only a decade ago. The recessionary forces continuing to buffet against our global and state economy have changed the economic realities in which we must work as well.

We cannot, as I've told several colleagues, change the direction of the wind, but we must adjust our sails to continue our progress.

In other words, we can, and indeed we must, find new and innovative ways to fulfill the education, research and service missions that make our institution so important to the future of the Commonwealth and the country.

In addition to my conversations on campus and with our external constituents, another component of information gathering has been thoughtful analysis by a University Review Committee I appointed to provide me with a fresh interpretation of where we stand and guidance on the more promising paths for advancement that exist for the University of Kentucky.

The review committee, chaired by Senate Council Chair Hollie Swanson, examined a wide variety of measures of our progress in the context of other nationally prominent institutions.

There is a clear acknowledgment in the report of the incredible progress made on a number of fronts over the last decade. But there also is a clear-eyed sense that a number of critically important areas -- the undergraduate education experience, infrastructure and facilities in the core of our campus and compensation among faculty and staff -- need immediate attention and thoughtful, sustained action.

Their report, completed earlier this week, can be viewed here at www.uky.edu/President/review_report.pdf.

I am particularly intrigued by some of the broad questions the Committee raises that shape how we see ourselves in an ever-changing environment and how we intend to move forward. They are questions that the entire campus should be engaged in thinking about and discussing:

- What are the 21st-century implications for UK's status as a flagship and land-grant university?

- What does the Top 20 quest signify for the University today?
- How can the University enhance its culture of academic excellence?
- How should UK continue to elevate the quality of incoming students?
- Should the University increase the number of non-resident students? How will this affect resident students?

As part of that ongoing dialogue, I ask that you provide me with your thoughts about these questions and the issues raised in the report. There is a short survey available at: https://uky.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_5vSHe6u1z8BUpvK. Answers are anonymous.

This report and your thoughts about it, along with the information I've gathered in conversations throughout the campus and my travels across the state, will help drive our decisions as we endeavor, together, to begin to shape a campus agenda and vision for the future. I also will be discussing this report and what I have heard with our Board of Trustees at their retreat this weekend.

I am deeply indebted to the review committee members for their tireless efforts and important work during this process. They care deeply about their colleagues, our students, and this institution, to which we are all committed.

Working together, our best days as an institution are ahead of us as we continue our ascent. Thank you for all you are doing to make that brighter and more promising future possible.

Sincerely,

Eli Capilouto
President