

State of the University Address

President Eli Capilouto

September 26, 2011

Thank you, Tom, for those very kind words and that warm introduction. Your career in life is an incredible example of the imprint that a graduate makes on his profession and indeed our world. It is most fitting to me today to be introduced by a second generation UK member, who is also the father of a third generation UK member, because this story of generation to generation is one I hear repeated time and time again as I crisscross this state. With great affection and pride, people share with me their family members who attended this university, the difference that that education has made in their lives, and then what they're doing to transform their communities today.

And Micah, we all are immensely proud of what you do. Your words are compelling but your action is even stronger so I thank you and all your fellow student government leaders for the inspiration you provide us and we are glad to make you, our students, first in all of what we do. And it's a pleasure to join all the faculty, staff and students here at this State of the University because without you we really wouldn't have much to celebrate, so I thank you for everything that you do.

It's a special moment for me to share with you the beautiful things that are happening on this campus, this flagship institution. It's always revealed to me daily in powerful stories. Our greatness thrives in these stories where we work hand in hand with each other to improve and lift lives in this state and across the country.

Two weeks ago, I had the privilege of introducing the freshmen class - the class of 2015 - to the UK Board of Trustees. I am proud that our newest Wildcats are our most academically accomplished Wildcats. We've been here for a 150 years and this class is outstanding. It has an average GPA of over 3.6. Twenty five percent of these first-year students have a GPA of 4.0 or above. Thirty percent of the freshmen class has an ACT score of 28 or above, and to put that in context, only eight percent of all Kentuckians score 28 or above. This is a profound testament to our institution's ability to attract the best and the brightest to the most serious 21st century education that can be provided.

But as Micah pointed out, we are also and always will be a place of opportunity. When Micah brought to my office James Blanc and Pedro Jean-Baptist and told me how they served as translators for a group of Lexington orthopedic surgeons who had volunteered their time and services in Haiti, I was moved. And then to learn that because of his efforts and those of others in this community, they're preparing to return to their country one day to be those healthcare providers who they got to serve as interpreters for during their visit.

Providing opportunities to all our students is an integral part of building a global community on this campus. It's a community that's open to new ways of thinking about things, new ways of life. An exposure to a tapestry of culture is key to preparing our

students to be global citizens. Moreover, it offers an opportunity to make a big university feel small. It's ability to build small neighborhoods within a large community. Our students can travel abroad. They can walk across this campus and work with world-class investigators. They can join student organizations and clubs where they build friendships and networks and supports that last for a lifetime. And many of those groups are going to be with us today, and I urge you to drop by their booths and tables out front to say hello.

I have been so encouraged about what our students do. As I crisscross the state and talk to our faculty here on campus, they tell me some of these stories, and I want to share those with you.

First, Joseph Mann. He took advantage of an opportunity to study abroad in South Africa. He worked with a human rights organization and took courses focusing on the history of the country and now, from that firsthand exposure, he understands South Africa and how those same issues affect countries around the world.

Dr. Mohammed Saeed, a master's student in our UK College of Public Health. Also a Fulbright Scholar, practiced medicine in Baghdad. This past summer he worked with the CDC in their immigrant, refuge and migrant help office. He is a resource now for these issues all over the globe.

Students in our College of Design are continuing work on the "River Cities" project, where they are able to repurpose facilities so that they can better serve those communities.

Our faculty. This past year, our faculty, competing nation-wide for resources, received over \$360 million in funds to support research. This research is answering the questions of our day. It will extend and improve the quality of life for Kentuckians and indeed people all across the globe.

As I traveled to our different colleges over these past few months, what I learned about our wonderful faculty is they are fully committed first to their role as educators and mentors for our next generation. They're deeply committed to the success of our students here today. They want to challenge your assumptions and ours. I think they're commitment to our students is manifest most in the remarkable reform of our general education curriculum, and I want to salute Provost Subbaswamy, all the deans and the countless faculty who worked on transformation of this core curriculum.

It's built upon four key goals. An emphasis on the arts, which is going to focus a student's understanding and ability to employ intellectual inquiry. It takes a holistic approach to communication and composition by assisting students with their written, oral, and most importantly in this day and age, their visual skills. Both as producers and consumers of information, they will excel. Our new curriculum emphasizes quantitative reasoning so that our students can be most informed to make data-driven decisions.

And lastly, we have integrated an immersive culture component that exposes our students to the complexities of being a global citizen.

I'm also deeply moved when I hear these stories about our dedicated staff. Like many of you, I'm sure you share the pride, as I did, when I opened the *New York Times* a couple of weeks ago to see a feature story on Sarah G. Fannin, an agricultural educator with our cooperative extension center. She's working in East Kentucky in impoverished communities to assist people with gardening, not as a hobby, but a way to get by in these challenging economic times. Healthier foods - at less cost - are on the tables of countless Kentuckians because of Sarah's work.

And Dr. Jay Zwischenberger, UK HealthCare's Surgeon-in-Chief. He developed an artificial lung device that is helping keep patients alive across the world as they await transplants.

I ask our faculty what makes them most proud. Time and time again, they tell me it's our graduates. The way they return to their communities and make such a big difference. I asked about some of these, and I wanted to share their stories.

First, there's Matt Cutts. He was one of the first 100 employees at Google. In fact, he was number 71. A Singletary Scholar and a native of Morehead, KY. While he was here, he worked on 3D imaging research with outstanding professors. So now, Matt is part of the world's largest search engine.

And Cathy Black. Cathy's a graduate of our College of Communications and Information Studies. She credits her internships while she was here in Lexington working with local TV stations as preparing her for her job today. She's responsible now for booking national talent, like recording artists Beyonce and Lady Gaga for the CBS Early Morning Show.

And D.C. Storm. He's an Accounting and Finance graduate of the Gatton College of Business and Economics. He travels the globe as the corporate auditor for NBC Universal. He described UK as a microcosm of the real world and credits his success to the time he spent on this campus exposed to different people and different situations.

Our graduates have done incredible things. They are poets, conductors, actors and novelists. They are our Pulitzer Prize winning journalists and reporters. They are computer scientists revolutionizing the way we use technology. They are civic leaders, Congressmen, Senators. They are the CEOs of Fortune 500 companies. They're small business entrepreneurs, and they're venture capitalists. They are inventors of life saving medical devices and we can proudly say, there's a Nobel Prize winning scientist amongst our alumni.

They were once ordinary students who now do extraordinary things. But they're also exemplary parents, civic leaders, and volunteers that have held together their families and communities.

We have had wonderful successes, and our best days are ahead of us. But we've got to do more. We have got to do more to recruit, educate and graduate the next generation of leaders. We must do more to prepare our students for an uncertain world. And to do so, we have to challenge ourselves.

It's not enough for us to teach our students the tools simply because they're the tools that need to be taught. We need to teach our students the concepts behind the tools - the theory that built the tools and lead to their existence. This is the level of critical thinking that leads to creative discourse. That's how we're going to prepare our students not just for jobs, but for them to be able to invent and create jobs that we've never even imagined. This is what we've always done in this state, and this is what we've always done in this country. By elevating the way we look at ideas, we're discovering solutions that we've never even dreamed of.

We're going to prepare our students to adopt and embrace new ways of thinking, to ask the tough questions, to analyze, and answer and elevate the level of public discourse. We are going to find the way, as Micah says, for each one of you to make an indelible impression on the University of Kentucky and indeed the world.

So I ask our students today, who among you will be the next poet laureate? Who will be the transformative entrepreneur? Who will be the groundbreaking inventor, or influential artist? Who among you will achieve greatness in pursuit of a better world? And who among you will lead your local community, your school board, your faith community, your city and your state?

We are counting on you. For Kentucky, YOUR dreams are our greatest hopes. You will create a better tomorrow, and it is the mission of the University of Kentucky to help you unleash your greatest potential. Thank you very much.