

Veterans Day 2011
November 10, 2011

The eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month stands as a marker in our history; a date that was to signify the end of the “war to end all wars.” Unfortunately, wars continue but the date still stands as the day Americans recognize the achievements and sacrifices that our military veterans have made in service to our country.

Soon after taking the job as your 12th president, Mary Lynn and I attended a play here on campus entitled “civilian.” It was the stunning result of a collaborative effort between the Theatre Department, the Louis B. Nunn Center for Oral History and our Veterans Resource Center. It told the story of six of our very own student veterans and their experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan. More significantly it told of their struggles reintegrating into a college environment.

I was moved by the raw emotion of the production and immediately thought of all the student veterans I'd left behind at Alabama that could benefit from such an effort. I knew leaving the venue that night that I would never look at veterans the same again. Tomorrow is our national day of recognition of our veterans, but I am proud to be part of a university family that honors its veterans every day. UK was recently ranked 7th in the country for veteran friendly campuses, and I'm not surprised. When collaboration is involved for the common good, our ability to honor our promise to those we serve is limitless.

Our campus is home to over 550 student veterans, with hundreds more working within the ranks of our staff and faculty. Their service in uniform may be as recent as a few days ago or it may be a distant memory, but I assure you that it is not forgotten. Their service will be recognized this Friday at noon outside the Main Building. Veterans can enjoy a free lunch and a lapel pin to commemorate their time in service to our country. Non-veterans can just stop by to say thanks, and pick up your own lapel pin to show your support. To all who have served, I thank you on behalf of a grateful campus community.