



May 21, 2020

Chairman Robert Vance
University of Kentucky Board of Trustees

Chair Vance,

As I write to you today, more than 500 of my colleagues are working tirelessly on teams and workstreams throughout the campus to chart the course of our fall semester—what must be a safe and reinvented normal for our University.

It is the most compelling reminder yet of how this campus endeavors every day to serve the Commonwealth whose name we bear and whose trust we keep. The last nine years have been the most rewarding and meaningful of my career – an experience made even richer because I have served with and for the members of this Board of Trustees.

I am humbled by the request of so many of the Board to seek an extension of my contract to continue our work together. As you know, my current contract requires me to provide formal notice to the board by June of my intent regarding future service. Given how rewarding that work has been, and the critical inflection point at which we find ourselves, I would be gratified by the opportunity to work toward a mutually agreed upon extension of my term as the University of Kentucky's 12th president.

As we move forward with those discussions, one important point that I would ask the Board to consider is the last year – 2020-2021 – of my current contract. I would propose to the Board that my annual salary be reduced by 10 percent. I would further propose that those dollars be directed toward the employee assistance fund that has been established by our Department of Human Resources (HR). We will be encouraging our community -- including my leadership team, faculty and staff -- to donate to either the HR fund or a recently established fund at the Bluegrass Community Foundation, which will have a similar purpose. This effort will work in concert with continued support for students through the Emergency Assistance and Relief Fund operated by our Division of Student and Academic Life.

In the coming days, we will be announcing further budget measures that I believe will only reinforce the commitment we have to our undergraduate and graduate students, faculty and staff and, indeed, how essential our efforts are in sustaining the economy of Fayette County and the region.

That spirit of service so manifest on our Board and among our team is, yet, another reminder that so much has been accomplished by so many over the last nine years. I have said many times that we are fortunate to stand on the shoulders of those who came before us. So often, I have basked in the glow of the policies you and the Board have led and the groundbreaking efforts and achievements of our students, faculty and staff.



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Those are the stories I am honored to tell. In nine short years together, we have achieved so much:

- Historic graduation rates, from 58.2 percent to 65.8 percent in nine years.
- From academic year 2016 to 2019, leading our state in producing 12.4 percent more bachelor's degrees; graduating 26.9 percent more students with degrees in STEM+H fields; graduating 38.1 percent more students of underrepresented race and ethnicity; and graduating 5.6 percent more students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Record numbers of students – growth of more than 8.7 percent over the last nine years -- to more than 30,500.
- Growth in research awards of more than 46.3 percent in five years to more than \$400 million annually. That includes the largest federal grant in our history of nearly \$90 million. More important than the amount is the ambition of the work – to reduce deaths from opioid use by 40 percent in 16 counties across Kentucky in three years.
- Treating more than 40,000 patients annually in our hospital, ranked No. 1 in the state four years running, in the midst of a health care enterprise that contains one of the top cancer centers in the country and nationally ranked programs that target the diseases and illnesses that afflict too many of our fellow Kentuckians.
- More than \$2.6 billion in construction of classrooms, research space, athletics facilities, residence halls and dining spaces, and using innovative partnerships that, along with prudent management, have ensured that debt levels as a percentage of our budget are below 3 percent.
- The creation of a nationally recognized program – UK LEADS – that targets the unmet financial need of our students.

That is a small snapshot of a large body of profoundly important work – work you and our Board have led and that our students, faculty, staff, alumni and donors have made possible.

Now, though, there is a fierce sense of urgency to our labors. A college education – offered in a distinctive residential campus experience – has never been more important. Our world needs professionals and clinicians who will blunt the impact of the next crisis we will, inevitably, face.

We need researchers and scientists, who are doggedly determined to develop treatments for the next pandemic and vaccines that will prevent it from flourishing. We need artists whose work soothes and inspires souls. We need writers who make us wonder and weep and who compel us to act.

We need policymakers who administer justice and forge the future of our state and nation wisely, with compassion and a sense of grace. And, we need the next generation of scholars who will mentor those students who will leave this place, ready to lead lives of meaning and purpose.

That mission has never been more important. The work we do has never been more meaningful. I look forward, in that spirit and with your support, to our collective commitment as the University of, for and with Kentucky. Thank you for what you have done, and will do, to make so much possible.

Sincerely,



Eli Capilouto

see blue.

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