

FCR 14

Office of the President
April 23, 2026

Members, Board of Trustees:

APPROVAL OF LAND LEASE (UK RESEARCH AND EDUCATION CENTER AT PRINCETON)

Recommendation: that the Board of Trustees approve an exception to Kentucky Revised Statutes (KRS) 164.131(7) pursuant to KRS 164.367, to permit the University to enter into a lease with employee Chris Rodgers under Request for Proposal (RFP) # RE-0225-26 until December 31, 2026, with the option of up to five (5) one-year renewals.

Background: Dr. William A. (“Andy”) Bailey, Ph.D., an Extension Professor in the Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment, oversees the Dark Tobacco Extension Program, which focuses on the agronomic aspects of dark tobacco production, tobacco pesticide screening, crop management and tobacco curing (“Project”). This research takes place on approximately ten (10) acres at the University of Kentucky Research and Education Center in Princeton, Kentucky. Due to the intermittent nature of the work and a shortage of reliable farm labor contractors in the region, the Project has had great difficulty procuring labor to assist with the harvest of the tobacco plots.

In 2024 and 2025, the University Procurement Services Office issued Requests for Proposals to lease the land to a bidder who would grow the specified crops and provide labor for all stages of the crop production in return for the marketable tobacco produced from the research trials. For both years, the only proposal submitted was from Chris Rodgers, a University employee who owns his own tobacco farm near Princeton but also works on the Project. He disclosed the conflict of interest in his proposals. KRS 164.131(7) prohibits an employee from having an interest in a contract with the University, unless approved by the Board. KRS 164.367 allows the University to establish a procedure whereby the Board may approve an employee having an interest in a contract with the University. It was recommended both years that the Board approve the exception, but it was also recommended that a new RFP issue after each year. The Board approved the exceptions each year at its December 5, 2023, and April 25, 2025, meetings.

Consistent with the prior recommendations, the University Procurement Services Office issued a new Request for Proposal (# RE-0225-26) in early 2026. Again, the only proposal submitted was from Chris Rodgers, and he disclosed the conflict of interest in his proposal. Following consultation with the General Counsel of the University and the University’s Chief Accountability Officer and Audit Executive, for the same reasons provided at the previous board meetings, it is recommended that the Board approve the exception and permit a new lease to run from May 15, 2026 through February 15, 2027

with the option of up to five (5) one-year renewals. A new RFP will be issued for lease or labor needed thereafter.

Action taken: Approved Disapproved Other _____



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