

Minutes of the Meeting of the Academic and Student Affairs Committee  
University of Kentucky  
Friday, February 20, 2026

The Academic and Student Affairs Committee (ASAC) of the University of Kentucky (UK) Board of Trustees met on Friday, February 20, 2026, in the Harris Ballroom of the Gatton Student Center.

A. Meeting Opened

Chair Alex Boone called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

B. Roll Call

The following members of the ASAC answered the call of the roll: McKenna Dowell, David Figg, Brenda Gosney, Lance Lucas, Hannah Myers, Karen Petrone, Paula Pope, Hollie Swanson, Clark Williams and Elaine Wilson.

C. Approval of Minutes

Chair Boone reported that the minutes of the December 2, 2025, ASAC meeting had been distributed. Trustee Lucas moved approval of the minutes, and Trustee Pope seconded the motion. Hearing no discussion, Chair Boone called for a vote and the motion passed without dissent.

D. ASACR 1: Undergraduate Certificate Recommendation: Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment

The recommendation was that the Board of Trustees approve the establishment of an undergraduate certificate in Coffee Science and Culture in the Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment.

By way of background, the proposed certificate in Coffee Science and Culture will cultivate the next generation of coffee scientists, professionals and passionate enthusiasts by offering interdisciplinary education across the entire coffee value chain, from farm to cup. The certificate will provide students with the skills to evaluate the history and sensory attributes of coffee to address key social, economic and environmental challenges and opportunities. Students graduating with an undergraduate certificate in Coffee Science and Culture will be prepared for a wide range of careers, including those in agriculture, food science and food business, as well as global development, economics and sustainability.

This proposed undergraduate certificate has been recommended to the Provost by the Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment faculty given their expertise within their respective disciplines. The Provost of the University supports the program faculty's recommendation.

Trustee Figg moved approval, which was seconded by Trustee Gosney. Hearing no discussion, Chair Boone called for a vote and the motion passed without dissent.

E. ASACR 2: Academic Degree Recommendation: College of Arts and Sciences

The recommendation was that the Board of Trustees approve the establishment of a Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Science degree in Mapping and Geographic Information Science (GIScience) in the College of Arts and Sciences.

By way of background, the proposed bachelor's degree in Mapping and GIScience will provide students with skills to play a critical role in addressing societal challenges, environmental sustainability and community engagement. With knowledge of analytical training, geospatial tools and technical skills, students will be able to determine the appropriateness of different computer-based applications and communicate insights with advanced cartographic design. Students graduating with a Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Science in Mapping and GIScience will be prepared for careers that make use of spatial data and spatial technologies, environmental monitoring, urban planning, health applications or business intelligence.

The proposed bachelor's degree has been recommended to the Provost by the College of Arts and Sciences faculty given their expertise within their respective disciplines. The Provost of the University supports the program faculty's recommendation.

Trustee Wilson moved approval, which was seconded by Trustee Swanson. Hearing no discussion, Chair Boone called for a vote and the motion passed without dissent.

F. ASACR 3: Academic Degree Recommendation: Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment

The recommendation was that the Board of Trustees approve the establishment of a Bachelor of Science degree in Agricultural Ecosystem Sciences in the Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment.

By way of background, the proposed bachelor's degree in Agricultural Ecosystem Sciences will provide students with skills required for the responsible stewardship of agricultural production systems leading to increased yields from, and multifunctionality of, the current agricultural land base while also minimizing agriculture's environmental impact. Students graduating with a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture Ecosystems Sciences will be prepared for careers in farm and farmstead management, agricultural data management, precision agriculture, crop production, crop consulting, soil conservation, agronomy, university or agribusiness research and product sales and in private or governmental programs.

The proposed bachelor's degree has been recommended to the Provost by the Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment faculty given their expertise within their respective disciplines. The Provost of the University supports the program faculty's recommendation.

Trustee Pope moved approval, which was seconded by Trustee Gosney. Hearing no discussion, Chair Boone called for a vote and the motion passed without dissent.

G. ASACR 4: Deletion of Graduate Certificate: College of Arts and Sciences

The recommendation was that the Board of Trustees approve the closure of the graduate certificate in Diversity and Inclusion in the College of Arts and Sciences.

By way of background, the graduate certificate in Diversity and Inclusion was designed for a wide range of professional backgrounds in recognition of our increasingly diverse world and workplaces. Due to low student demand and the resulting challenges in offering the required coursework, the College of Arts and Sciences has requested to close the graduate certificate in Diversity and Inclusion.

The proposed closure of this graduate certificate has been recommended to the Provost by the College of Arts and Sciences faculty given their expertise within their respective disciplines. The Provost of the University supports the program faculty's recommendation.

Trustee Figg moved approval, which was seconded by Trustee Gosney. Hearing no discussion, Chair Boone called for a vote. Trustees Dowell, Petrone, Swanson and Williams abstained. The motion passed without dissent.

H. ASACR 5: Undergraduate Certificate: College of Education

The recommendation was that the Board of Trustees approve the establishment of an undergraduate certificate in Health and Wellness Coaching in the College of Education.

By way of background, the proposed certificate in Health and Wellness Coaching addresses a need for improved health outcomes among college students and in Kentucky. The certificate will provide students with an innovative opportunity to gain practical, interdisciplinary experience in health promotion, wellness coaching and behavior change. Upon completing the certificate, students will be eligible to sit for the National Board-Certified Health and Wellness Coaches Exam.

The proposed undergraduate certificate has been recommended to the Provost by the College of Education faculty given their expertise within their respective disciplines. The Provost of the University supports the program faculty's recommendation.

Trustee Pope moved approval, which was seconded by Trustee Dowell. Hearing no discussion, Chair Boone called for a vote and the motion passed without dissent.

I. ASACR 6: Undergraduate Certificate: Pigman College of Engineering

The recommendation was that the Board of Trustees approve the establishment of an undergraduate certificate in Electric Vehicle Systems in the Stanley and Karen Pigman College of Engineering.

By way of background, the proposed certificate in Electric Vehicle Systems will fill the needs of Kentucky's growing automotive industry with graduates who can support Electric Vehicle design, manufacturing and grid-support. The certificate will equip students

with regulatory, societal, economic and technical knowledge related to electric vehicles.

The proposed undergraduate certificate has been recommended to the Provost by the Stanley and Karen Pigman College of Engineering faculty, given their expertise within their respective disciplines. The Provost of the University supports the program faculty's recommendation.

Trustee Wilson moved approval, which was seconded by Trustee Pope. Hearing no discussion, Chair Boone called for a vote and the motion passed without dissent.

J. ASACR 7: Center Name Change: College of Public Health

The recommendation was that the Board of Trustees approve the change in the name of the UK Center for Research on Violence Against Women to the UK Center for Research on Violence Prevention in the College of Public Health effective July 1, 2026.

By way of background, the original mission for the Center for Research on Violence Against Women (CRVAW) was to advance the welfare and safety of women impacted by violence. The center moved to the College of Public Health on September 13, 2024, and now focuses on preventing violence through developing and testing strategies to reduce or prevent violence regardless of personal identifiers. The name change reflects the research focus to reduce violence by using and testing novel intervention and prevention strategies.

The proposed name change has been recommended to the Provost by the College of Public Health faculty and center leadership. The Provost of the University supports the recommendation.

Trustee Dowell moved approval, which was seconded by Trustee Figg. Hearing no discussion, Chair Boone called for a vote. Trustees Petrone and Swanson opposed. The motion passed.

K. ASACR 8: Merger of Educational Units: College of Education

The recommendation was that the Board of Trustees approve the merger of the Department of STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) Education and the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, renaming the Department to the Department of Teaching and Learning, effective upon approval by the Board of Trustees.

By way of background, the College of Education has carefully evaluated their educational mission. Through this evaluation, they determined that merging the departments of STEM and Curriculum and Instruction will provide students with greater access to courses and learning experiences benefiting career paths, while increasing research and teaching collaboration among faculty members. The newly established department will foster the integration of STEM concepts across the curriculum for future educators, while enhancing operational efficiency and delivering cost savings to the College of Education administrative structure.

The proposed merger has been recommended to the Provost by the College of Education faculty given their expertise within their respective disciplines and reviewed by the Office of the Provost. The Provost of the University supports this recommendation.

Trustee Lucas moved approval, which was seconded by Trustee Myers. Hearing no discussion, Chair Boone called for a vote and the motion passed without dissent.

L. Provost Report

Provost DiPaola focused on two primary areas: updates on dean searches across the University and progress on the CATS AI course. He stated that leadership recruitment is taken very seriously at the University, emphasizing that selecting the right leaders is critical to institutional success. He explained that the dean search process follows a structured, multi-stage approach, beginning with organization and formation of a representative search advisory committee composed of faculty, staff and students. He noted that recruitment efforts have been particularly strong, with increased interest in positions, including more than 100 applicants for the Lewis Honors College dean role, reflecting growing recognition of the University.

Provost DiPaola explained that the interview stage is the most intensive phase, consisting of Zoom screening interviews, confidential off-site interviews and final on-campus visits. He stated that on-campus interviews include open forums and extensive stakeholder engagement, followed by significant feedback collection and due diligence. He reported current progress across several colleges: the Rosenberg College of Law search is nearing completion following final interviews and due diligence; the College of Health Sciences is entering its public interview phase; the College of Nursing has completed off-site interviews with on-campus visits scheduled; and the Lewis Honors College remains in the application review stage. He added that the College of Pharmacy search will begin next academic year, while the Gatton College of Business will appoint an interim dean due to the current dean's retirement.

Provost DiPaola stated that these searches are expected to conclude largely by the end of the academic year and emphasized the importance of recruiting strong talent to sustain the University's growth and trajectory. He reported that engaging with candidates has reinforced the University's strengths and competitiveness, particularly in attracting high-quality faculty and leaders. He highlighted the broader institutional focus on talent, infrastructure and innovation, noting that continued recruitment of exceptional individuals is essential during periods of change.

Provost DiPaola reported that the CATS AI course, TEK 100, has been expanded from a one-credit student course into an asynchronous, online offering available to all University students, faculty and staff. He stated that the course, developed by faculty Tama Thé and Katherine Thompson with support from the communications team, consists of six modules covering AI fundamentals, productivity tools, critical evaluation techniques and ethical considerations. He explained that modules include topics such as AI-assisted efficiency, adversarial testing of ideas and identifying inaccuracies or "hallucinations" in AI outputs, emphasizing the importance of verifying sources and using AI critically.

Provost DiPaola stated that the course is designed to promote effective and responsible AI use rather than discourage it, encouraging participants to leverage AI to enhance productivity and decision-making. In response to Trustee Swanson's inquiry about the time commitment to complete the report, he reported that each module requires approximately one hour to complete, with optional assignments for deeper engagement. He stated that the initiative aligns with the University's goal of building an AI-ready workforce and equipping individuals with practical skills to apply AI thoughtfully and effectively. He concluded his report by playing a video showcasing TEK 100, which included students explaining various AI-projects based upon their academic interests.

M. Vice President for Student Success Report

Vice President Turner revisited and updated prior discussions about the evolving profile of the current student, noting that earlier work on the "iGeneration" had been disrupted by COVID. She emphasized that the University continues to monitor generational shifts to better understand student behaviors, motivations and needs. She introduced Maddy Trudeau, director of organizational excellence, highlighting her role in analyzing both national and local data to inform how the University adapts its strategies and student support systems.

Director Trudeau reported that national enrollment trends show modest growth in post-secondary education, particularly within public four-year institutions, with the South experiencing stronger increases than other regions. However, she cautioned that long-term projections indicate a forthcoming enrollment cliff, with a declining number of traditional college-age students in future years. She also noted shifting academic interests, with increased enrollment in career-aligned fields such as business, health professions and engineering, alongside declines in computer science and liberal arts, suggesting a growing emphasis on direct career outcomes.

Director Trudeau stated that today's students are shaped by several key national trends, including heightened concerns about affordability, widespread integration of technology and increased reliance on artificial intelligence. She reported that a majority of students worry about paying for college and are actively seeking cost-effective pathways, while also engaging heavily with digital tools for learning. At the same time, she emphasized significant challenges related to mental health and academic preparedness, including rising levels of anxiety and depression and declining proficiency in reading and math among incoming students.

Director Trudeau explained that these trends coalesce into five primary student archetypes: the tech optimist, cost-conscious pragmatist, safety-first student, overburdened warrior and traditional achiever. She described how students balance enthusiasm for technology with a desire for personalized and collaborative learning, while also prioritizing financial return on investment, campus safety and mental well-being. She further noted that many students experience high levels of stress, loneliness and physical health challenges, even as a majority remain optimistic about their future and committed to achieving their academic and career goals.

Director Trudeau concluded that these archetypes are not fixed categories but overlapping mindsets that students move between depending on circumstances. She emphasized that current students are pragmatically optimistic, technologically adept and highly aware of both financial and mental health considerations. She stated that understanding these dynamics enables the University to better support students holistically and indicated that future presentations will focus on how the University of Kentucky is specifically adapting its programs and services to meet these evolving needs.

N. SGA President Report

President Dowell reported that the Student Government Association (SGA) has remained active and productive throughout the spring semester, working collaboratively across the University to support student needs and enhance campus engagement. She highlighted wellbeing and safety initiatives, including CPR certification trainings that have already served dozens of students with additional sessions underway, as well as upcoming self-defense classes coordinated with campus partners.

President Dowell stated that student support efforts have also included a large-scale success fair in partnership with multiple University offices and organizations, drawing significant student participation. She further reported the distribution of hundreds of parking vouchers, providing thousands of hours of free parking to students, and noted the continuation of the annual Donations for Citations initiative in partnership with University Transportation and the Big Blue Pantry to allow students to offset parking citations through donations.

President Dowell reported that internally, the SGA has made substantial investments in student success by allocating funding to dozens of registered student organizations and continuing to review additional funding requests. She also noted that the Academic Affairs Committee has reviewed numerous scholarship applications for the Lee T. Todd Jr. Blue Awards and provided graduate preparation resources to students to support their academic advancement.

President Dowell stated that the organization is currently engaged in its election season, including hosting the annual presidential and vice presidential debates, with voting scheduled for early March. She also reported that student leadership is preparing for advocacy efforts, including a trip to Washington, D.C., to meet with federal representatives and promote student priorities on behalf of the University.

President Dowell reported that collaboration continues at the state level through participation in the Board of Kentucky Student Body Presidents, with regular meetings hosted at institutions across the Commonwealth, including at the University. She concluded by noting preparations for the upcoming Rally for Higher Education in Frankfort, where student leaders will advocate for higher education and highlight its impact across Kentucky. Trustee Swanson asked when the rally would occur; President Dowell confirmed the event was scheduled for the following Thursday at 9:00 a.m.

O. Meeting Adjourned

Hearing no further business, Chair Boone adjourned the meeting at 10:22 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Shavonna Ross  
Academic and Student Affairs Committee Secretary