

Minutes of the University Athletics Committee
University of Kentucky
Thursday, April 24, 2025

The University Athletics Committee of the University of Kentucky Board of Trustees met on Thursday, April 24, 2025, in the Gatton Student Center, Harris Ballroom.

I. Meeting Opened

Trustee David Melanson, chair of the University Athletics Committee, called the meeting to order at 2:46 p.m. Chair Melanson asked Katie Hardwick to call the roll.

II. Roll Call

The following members of the University Athletics Committee were present: Board Members Skip Berry, Todd Case, Lance Lucas, David Melanson and Frank Shoop; Community Advisory Member Wilbur Hackett; and Faculty Athletics Representative Joe Fink. Community Advisory Members Vickie Bell and Wells Bullard were absent.

III. Approval of Minutes

Chair Melanson asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the February 20, 2025, meeting. Trustee Case moved approval of the minutes, and Trustee Lucas seconded the motion. The motion carried without dissent.

Chair Melanson introduced Athletics Director Barnhart for remarks.

IV. Athletics Director's Report

Athletics Director Barnhart reported that the University of Kentucky hosted the National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA) Rifle Championship, where Coach Harry Mullins' team finished second nationally. He noted this marked the program's seventh national runner-up finish, adding to its four national titles. Five Wildcats earned All-America honors.

He stated that the gymnastics team, led by All-American Isabella Magnelli, reached the NCAA Regionals and ended the season ranked ninth nationally under Coach Tim Garrison. He continued by noting that Carlie Makarawu won the men's 200-meter dash at the NCAA Indoor Track and Field Championship, helping Coach Lonnie Greene's team secure a 16th-place national finish. Six Wildcats earned All-America honors.

He highlighted the men's swimming and diving team's 20th-place finish at the NCAA Championship, its best in 15 years. Three student-athletes earned All-America honors under Coach Bret Lundgaard.

Athletics Director Barnhart stated that basketball coaches Kenny Brooks and Mark Pope successfully built new rosters. Coach Brooks' women's team earned a top-16 seed, hosted the first two NCAA rounds, and finished with 23 wins. Georgia Amoore was named an All-American and selected sixth in the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) Draft.

He shared that Coach Pope's men's team advanced to the NCAA Sweet 16 for the first time since 2019, defeating Troy and Illinois. The team concluded the season with 24 wins. He added that both basketball staffs are achieving strong results in high school recruiting and through the transfer portal.

He informed the group that the STUNT team, led by Coach Blair Bergmann, is currently competing at the Division I National Championships in Nashville. He concluded the winter report by noting that the University ranks 20th in national all-sports standings among 364 Division I institutions.

Athletics Director Barnhart noted that the men's and women's tennis teams have concluded Southeastern Conference (SEC) play and are awaiting NCAA selections. He reported that the men's golf team is competing in the SEC Tournament and that the University will host the NCAA Women's Golf Regional in May.

He provided updates that Coach Lawson's softball team holds a 27-20 record, while Coach Mingione's baseball team is 23-15, including a series win at No. 2 Tennessee and a victory over Louisville. He noted that both outdoor track teams are ranked in the national top 40 and will host the SEC Championship in May.

Athletics Director Barnhart acknowledged continued academic success by student-athletes. He stated that 116 student-athletes are expected to graduate at Commencement, including 13 master's degrees. Combined with 33 December graduates, the total for the academic year is 149. He noted that seven graduates are part of the Cawood Ledford Scholarship Program, supporting former student-athletes in degree completion.

He announced that 50 athletes were named to the SEC Winter Sports Academic Honor Roll. He said that strong results are expected from the upcoming NCAA Academic Progress Rate report. He congratulated Dr. Rick Honaker, Professor of Mining Engineering, on receiving the SEC Faculty Achievement Award.

He recognized several student-athletes named to SEC Community Service Teams, including Andrew Carr, Dazia Lawrence, Lizzy Stevens, Eli Stephenson, Drew Johnson, Torie Buerger and Annie Riegert.

Athletics Director Barnhart shared that the Memorial Coliseum renovation is nearing completion and has served as an excellent venue for volleyball, women's basketball, gymnastics and STUNT this year. He emphasized improved comfort and convenience for fans. He announced a Grand Re-Opening Celebration on Saturday, April

26 featuring an outdoor community event from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. with food trucks, vendors, military displays and access to the World War II memorial monuments. He stated that the indoor ceremony from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. will include speakers from the University, student-athletes, and military and government officials.

Athletics Director Barnhart reported that 21 student-athletes were inducted into the Frank G. Ham Society of Character for leadership, academics and service. He reminded attendees of the 23rd annual CATSPY Awards taking place on Monday, April 28 to honor UK Athletics achievements over the past year.

Athletics Director Barnhart emphasized the department's strategic goal, aligned with President Capilouto's vision, to bring championship events to the University campus. He stressed the impact on student recruitment and community engagement. He stated that by the end of the academic year, UK Athletics will have hosted 13 championships across NCAA, SEC and Kentucky High School Athletic Association (KHSAA) organizations. He listed hosted events including NCAA championships in women's soccer, volleyball, rifle, men's basketball and women's basketball, as well as KHSAA championships in football, swimming and diving. He noted upcoming events: NCAA Women's Golf Regional, SEC Track and Field Championships and KHSAA events in tennis, track and field, softball and baseball.

He added that the University also hosted a sold-out concert at Kroger Field featuring Tyler Childers and Wynonna Judd with over 40,000 in attendance.

He concluded by thanking the athletics staff for their commitment to event planning and execution, acknowledging the heavy workload required to host major events while maintaining UK Athletics operations.

V. Business Items

Chair Melanson introduced Vice President and Chief Strategy and Growth Officer Rob Edwards to join President Capilouto and Director Barnhart for a presentation on the Future of UK Athletics.

President Capilouto reported that for more than 160 years, the University of Kentucky has pursued one defining mission: Advancing Kentucky. He described this mission as a call to push forward a Kentucky that is healthier, wealthier and wiser. For 144 of those years, UK Athletics has played a key role in that mission, not only achieving success on the field but preparing student-athletes for lives of meaning and purpose.

He stated that UK Athletics, under the leadership of Mitch Barnhart, has created a nationally respected program that honors the name "Kentucky" on the jersey. The program has generated Olympic medalists and national champions and inspired generations of Kentuckians. He reflected on the deep emotional and cultural ties between athletics and the people of the Commonwealth, noting how Athletics has bound individuals to the University regardless of their formal affiliation.

President Capilouto emphasized that Athletics is a core component of the University's national brand and community-building mission. He highlighted UK Athletics' financial contributions to academic scholarships and critical campus infrastructure, reinforcing its broader institutional value.

He noted that the current environment presents unprecedented challenges. The landscape of college athletics has undergone dramatic transformation over the last 15 years, marked by new name image likeness (NIL) compensation structures and greater athlete mobility. These changes have created financial and operational pressures that require new strategies.

He explained that while a pending federal settlement could provide legal clarity and regulatory guardrails, the financial demands on programs like UK Athletics will continue to increase. He reiterated the University's commitment to leveraging athletics to support its mission and provide students with meaningful growth opportunities.

President Capilouto introduced a new model called Champions Blue, an innovative structure designed to secure the long-term success of UK Athletics. This model includes updated governance, financial agility and a platform for future growth. He emphasized that every part of the University is facing stress and scrutiny, and this model is part of a broader effort to ensure alignment, stability and mission-focus across all operations.

He asked for support from the Board in approving the creation of Champions Blue as an affiliated corporation under Beyond Blue. This entity will help Athletics adapt to new realities while preserving its role as a vital contributor to the University's mission.

He concluded by sharing the guiding principles behind the proposed model:

- Create a flexible model that achieves our strategy – sustaining and creating a foundation from which to grow – while being responsive to change
- Deepening the already strong alignment that exists between Athletics and the University. Partnership has never been more important.
- Minimizing disruption – to our people, our student athletes and fans. We have work to do, and we have the right people to do it. We want our student athletes to focus on competition and education. And we want to find ways to continue to improve the fan experience.
- Ensure our organization maintains stability and continuity even as we recognize change is inevitable and will continue.
- Be future-focused with our model – we are building something for the long-term to strengthen athletics and protect the institution.
- Ensure this model capitalizes on new revenue streams and opportunities for growth that will ensure stability.
- Create and maintain a governance model that enables our organization to act both quickly and effectively.

President Capilouto reaffirmed that this effort is rooted in the University's enduring goal — to advance Kentucky — and invited continued collaboration and dialogue as the University moves forward.

Athletics Director Barnhart stated that UK Athletics has consistently adapted to the changing college athletics landscape. He reported most recently, the House v. NCAA settlement as proposed and how it may fundamentally reshape the college athletics industry, including direct payments to student-athletes, roster limits, and a \$2.8B in backpay to former student-athletes.

He stated that Kentucky's legislature has already enacted legislation to support this transition, allowing for revenue sharing while ensuring market standards and legal protections.

Athletics Director Barnhart emphasized that UK Athletics' strong financial record positions the University well for upcoming demands and detailed over \$50M in funds for future consideration including revenue shares, scholarships, and inflationary pressure.

Director Barnhart pivoted to Vice President and Chief Strategy and Growth Officer Rob Edwards who discussed the proposed establishment of Champions Blue, LLC, a new financial and organizational model under Beyond Blue, as a necessary evolution and based on UK HealthCare's experience with Royal Blue Health and Claire Blue Health. It is designed to keep UK Athletics competitive and legally adaptive in a changing NCAA environment. It provides structured flexibility to rapidly adapt as the landscape changes, enables UK to unlock new revenue streams, protects the University from unknowns of the evolving college athletics landscape, creates the ability for policy differentiation from the University, and provides athletics access to outside experts.

Dr. Edwards explained Champions Blue, LLC would become a disregarded entity under Beyond Blue, LLC. It would be an affiliated corporation of the University to assist in carrying out its programs, missions or other functions, and led by a Board of Directors that includes senior administrators and outside directors with sufficient expertise to aid Champions Blue, LLC.

He added, the authority and role of the UK Board of Trustees and the Athletics Committee would remain the same with the establishment of Champions Blue just as it has with other Beyond Blue entities.

VI. Other Business

PR 6 Creation of Champions Blue, LLC

President Capilouto thanked Director Barnhart and Dr. Edwards and introduced PR 6, a request that the committee favorably recommend to the Board of Trustees to approve the creation of a new affiliated corporation, Champions Blue, LLC, to manage and coordinate the University's educational mission concerning intercollegiate athletics.

Chair Melanson asked for a motion to recommend PR 6. Trustee Shoop moved approval, and Trustee Case seconded the motion. It carried without dissent.

VII. Adjournment

Chair Melanson reminded the Committee that the full Athletics Report had been loaded to Directors Desk. With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:37 p.m.

Respectively submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Katie Hardwick', written in a cursive style.

Katie Hardwick
University Athletics Committee Secretary