

Meeting change head on

Central Kentucky higher education institutions adapting programs to train tomorrow's workforce

BY DEBRA GIBSON ISAACS

ALWAYS agents of change, Kentucky colleges and universities are meeting ever-evolving needs of those growing into new life roles that effect positive change in society—and pave the way for the next generation.

Never has that been more crucial than today.

Recognizing the importance of helping students and faculty meet multifaceted change head on, the University of Kentucky announced a major reorganization last year.

“The reorganization resulted in a more diverse and representative leadership team focused on the university’s core strategic imperatives,” UK President Eli Capilouto said.

Three new faces are part of that reorganization.

Kirsten Turner was named UK’s first vice president for student success, which starts with recruitment and continues through enrollment and on to graduation. UK also named its first chief accountability officer, Joe Reed. And it named Nancy Cox its first vice president for land-grant engagement.

UK also implemented an array of new programs. One of those is Togetherall, an online peer-to-peer community accessible to students 24/7 at no cost. An internet connection is all that is needed. Togetherall is an extension of ProtoCall Services, which provides after-hours counseling.

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The Kentucky Community and Technical College System is the commonwealth’s largest postsecondary institution with 16 colleges and more than 70 campuses, serving more than 100,000 students annually. It also is Kentucky’s largest provider of workforce training and online education. Through partnerships with business and industry, KCTCS aligns its programs to meet the needs of local employers. Its colleges are united in their commitment to making life better for students, communities and the citizens of Kentucky. Since its creation, KCTCS has served nearly 1 million Kentuckians.



BCTC photo

For those who prefer face-to-face interactions, UK created After Office Hours. Every fall semester, the Office of Residence Life invites colleagues from across campus into its residence halls to engage with students after normal business hours. Attendees discuss various topics, such as campus resources and adjusting to college life, as well as students’ aspirations, interests and needs.

UK, one of two research universities in the state, was selected as a site for Johnson & Johnson’s vaccine booster shot trials. UK also participated in Moderna’s national trial on the safety/effectiveness of its COVID-19 vaccine in young children.

The powerful combination of meeting student needs and earning nationwide respect for research is no doubt part of the reason UK announced record enrollment/retention numbers.

UK reported an all-time high enrollment of 31,776 undergraduate, graduate and professional students for fall 2021, a 2.1% increase from the previous year’s record of 31,110. Additionally, data show an almost 10% increase in the number of graduate and professional students, a significant element in UK’s overall enrollment growth.

New programs to meet new demands can be found on campuses across the state. New facilities are often needed as

▲EXPANDING ENGINEERING PIPELINE

Bluegrass Community and Technical College is partnering with Toyota and the College of Engineering at the University of Kentucky on an engineering program that allows BCTC students to earn an Associate of Applied Science (AAS) and a Bachelor of Science (BS) in Engineering Technology.

well. Eastern Kentucky University, one of Kentucky’s regional universities, is renovating several buildings.

The new ECU Recreation and Wellness Center along with the Case Dining Hall and the renovated Powell Student Center will greatly enliven this campus area.

Private universities launch new programs

A few miles south of Lexington in Wilmore, Asbury University—a private university grounded in the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition—recently launched three new master’s degree programs.

Through the master’s degree in sport management, students learn from industry leaders how to plan, organize, lead, market and communicate with an emphasis on the sports industry. The curriculum provides students with coursework, experiential learning, project-based courses and professional experience. One hundred percent of

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►**NURSING AND MIDWIFERY** Frontier Nursing University's Versailles campus allows the university to continue to expand enrollment and program offerings to meet the growing demand for access to quality health care nationwide, especially in rural and underserved areas.

responding alumni reported a pay raise, promotion or new employment within three months of graduation.

The private university also announced a new honors program, a new master's degree in equine management, and a new master's degree in instructional design.

Transylvania University, a top-ranked private liberal arts college located in the heart of Lexington, announced plans to launch a new Center for Entrepreneurship.

The goal of the new center is to encourage students in any academic major to pursue their passion, promoting creativity and innovation and providing exposure to a vast range of entrepreneurial career paths.

The center will initially focus on engaging students with extracurricular, experiential programs and events, including startup competitions, workshops, a speaker series, and opportunities to introduce students to entrepreneurs, businesses, and organizations.

In Danville, private, nationally recognized Centre College's largest, most comprehensive construction project to date is underway and will create a 135,000-s.f. facility devoted to physical wellness and athletic excellence.

The \$50 million project reflects Centre's commitment to invest in facilities and programs that enhance student success, hone leadership skills and prepare graduates for lives of impact, according to Centre President Milton Moreland.

Frontier University offers nursing, midwifery education

Frontier University was founded in 1939 as the Frontier Graduate School of Midwifery. FNU has since grown to become one of the largest not-for-profit universities in the United States for advanced nursing and midwifery education.

As a pioneer in graduate nursing and nurse-midwifery education, FNU remains at the forefront of innovation and technology with top-ranked, accredited programs delivered via community-based distance education. Graduate programs lead to a master of science in nursing (MSN), a post-graduate certificate or a doctor of



Photo courtesy of FNU

nursing practice (DNP). FNU also offers a post-master's DNP for certified nurse-midwives and nurse practitioners who already hold a national certification and want to pursue a DNP.

FNU was named one of the Great Colleges to Work For 2021, receiving honors in 10 categories, including job satisfaction and support, compensation and benefits, professional development, and diversity, inclusion and well-being, among others. The school has 256 employees.

In 2020, FNU was named a Top College for Diversity by *INSIGHT Into Diversity* magazine.

Technical education programs provide career opportunities

Bluegrass Community and Technical College (BCTC) was created for those who want to learn specific skills they need to enter the workforce with a good salary in high-demand fields. BCTC, one of 16 community and technical schools in the state, offers associate degrees and skills diplomas and certificates.

Many programs are available to students at little to no cost. Those age 16-24 who need financial help can get tuition assistance; books and supplies; transportation assistance; individualized support services; career preparation; and job placement if they qualify.

Students can choose from programs in health care, computer and information technology, HVAC technology, construction, criminal justice, electrical technology, equine studies, industrial maintenance, medical information technology, welding and more. All are in-demand fields.

BCTC is also a part of KCTCS's KY FAME—Kentucky Federation of Advanced Manufacturing Education—an earn-and-learn program that started in Central Kentucky through a partnership with Toyota and 16 other manufacturers to prepare students for advanced manufacturing careers. KY FAME defined an Advanced Manufacturing Technician program and career pathway model that was adopted across several states.

Statistics show significant results. KY FAME participants have a higher graduation rate than those not in the program; roughly 80% completed KY FAME. They also have higher earnings. The one-, three- and five-year earnings show that five years into their careers, FAME graduates earn nearly \$100,000, which is \$45,000 more than the non-FAME graduates.

Ninety-four percent of graduates said on-the-job training was the most important part of the program, and 87% said the combination of classroom learning and on-the-job training was most important.

"Manufacturing has been significantly changed by technology," said Dr. Koffi Akakpo, BCTC president. "Those seeking careers in manufacturing must train in technology, critical thinking and problem solving. Our students are able to build relationships with employers, develop career skills, earn a paycheck and graduate college with little or no debt."

Students will begin in either the integrated engineering technology or computer engineering technology AAS program at BCTC and continue on to the new UK Department of Engineering Technology to study lean systems

I'll fly away

NEARLY 800,000 pilots will be needed during the next 20 years. To meet that need, Eastern Kentucky University (EKU) created one of the nation's first FAA-approved 1,000-hour restricted ATP institutions to provide flight students an advantage over the older methods of training. It is the only program of its kind in Kentucky.

The bachelor of science degree has concentrations in professional flight, aerospace management, and aerospace technology. Besides an aviation core, students are required to take supporting courses in mathematics, statistics, physics, and business management. Graduates of the program are professionally prepared for all facets of the aerospace industry to include piloting, flight instruction, aviation management, and aerospace technology.

engineering technology or computer engineering technology to complete their bachelor's degree. These opportunities are made possible in large part due to a \$2.25 million gift from Toyota.

Graduates of the new pathways are trained in the latest technologies and equipped with the practical skills necessary for thriving in advanced technology industries.

Training for new technologies is also the goal for a new \$14.7 million technology center that will serve high school and technical college students and provide training for displaced workers in Estill and Powell counties.

The Estill County Area Technology Center (ATC) will serve around 300 students. The 40,000-s.f. ATC will house six career and technical programs and will also be the new home of the Estill County Success/Virtual Academy.

"Technical centers, like the new Estill County Area Technology Center, are key to preparing the future workforce of Kentucky. Our students will develop the latest and most in-demand skills in high demand areas including health and computer sciences," Glass said.

Midway lowers tuition for MBA students

In addition to modern programs and facilities, students also need money for tuition and necessities such as books.

To help make that possible for more students, Midway University has lowered its tuition rate for its master of business administration (MBA) program from \$520 to \$475 per credit hour.

The Midway MBA can be earned in just one year (30 credit hours) as

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The mission of FNU is to provide accessible nurse-midwifery and nurse practitioner education to prepare competent, entrepreneurial, ethical, and compassionate leaders in primary care to serve all individuals with an emphasis on women and families in diverse, rural, and underserved populations. FNU offers graduate nurse-midwifery and nurse-practitioner distance education programs that can be pursued full- or part-time with the student's home community serving as the classroom.

Degrees and options offered include Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP), Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) or post-graduate certificates. In 2021, Frontier was named a "Great College to Work For" by the Great Colleges to Work For program.

students can take courses over five modules throughout the year. Students can further specialize in one of five areas of concentration—equine management; health care administration; human resource management; sport management, and tourism and event management. ●



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