

JUNE/JULY 2023
EDITION

WILDCAT CANTER

UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY AG EQUINE PROGRAMS NEWSLETTER

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HIGHLIGHTS



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PAGE 8

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KENTUCKY EQUINE SURVEY REVEALS RESILIENCE OF STATE'S EQUINE INDUSTRY

PAGE 13

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PAGE 15

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UPCOMING EVENTS AND IMPORTANT DEADLINES

Aug. 21 - First day of classes

Aug. 24 - Equine Welcome Back BBQ, E.S. Good Barn, 5 p.m.

Sept. 28 - Kentucky Signature Industries Career Fair featuring Equine and Bourbon, 2-5 p.m.

Oct. 8-14 - UK Equine Week of Service

Full event listings and details can be found [here](#).

WELCOME

What a year it's been! From some record cold and windy days in the winter, to some record hot and steamy days in the summer. Welcome to Kentucky!

I can hardly believe we are starting the '23 Fall semester already. The last few years have been so different from what we were accustomed to. It feels good to start doing what we do best, which is learning and teaching about horses.

This has been one of the most exciting summers I've had in a long time. In May, right after finals week, Holly Wiemers and I took a group of 11 Equine Science and Management students to visit Ireland and learn about their equine industry. What a fantastic opportunity these students had, one of the most uniquely tailored experiences that I am sure has impacted and changed their lives forever.

This trip was supposed to happen in 2020, but we had to cancel it because COVID canceled the world at that time. So we postponed it a year, then two, and finally were able to go see those magnificent farms and horses this past May.

We visited Thoroughbred and Sport Horse operations, but also swung our legs over some awesome Cobs for a trekking ride by the ocean.

It was awesome to visit and learn from the best in the world in their sector of industry, and to investigate what makes them the crème of the crop. We visited Coolmore, including their famous museum, where we saw the Triple Crown trophies won by American Pharoah and Justify, The Irish National Stud, Cian O'Connor's Karlswood, Godolphin's Kildangan, Richard and Georgina Sheane's Cooley Farm, Gordon Elliot's Cullentra House, The Curragh Racecourse, the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprises and its fantastic program in Northern Ireland and, of course, Coolmore's Ballydoyle, with a special pow wow and wisdom impartation from the one and only Aidan O'Brien. You can read more about our trip in this issue.

Of course, we were smitten by their facilities, personnel, horses and the difference in their training techniques. But what inspired us the most was how they all shared the utmost love, respect and even awe for this majestic and royal creature that has brought us together.

It humbled me to think that I developed an adoration for horses at age 0, all the way back in Brazil. There I rode horses on our cattle ranches, took jumping lessons and enjoyed the legacy of my family's racing history. And it was the horse that brought me to the University of Kentucky to start my PhD at 23 years old, right after I graduated from veterinary school. Since then, the horse, through the University of Kentucky, has opened so many doors, has introduced me to so many phenomenal and world-renowned people and taken me to multiple countries in the world, where I have acquired and imparted knowledge with like-minded professionals. Who would have thought that a childhood addiction could turn into this very fulfilling career and lifestyle?

If it has happened to me, it can certainly happen to anyone that puts enough effort, time and dedication into their passion. Do not let anyone say otherwise. Follow your dreams, make wise decisions, be eager to learn, have a strong work ethic, abandon what holds you back and you too can embark on this beautiful journey that only the horse can take you on.



FERNANDA CAMARGO,
DVM, PHD, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
AND EQUINE EXTENSION SPECIALIST



MASTHEAD

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NEW FACES

Meghan Wulster-Radcliffe has joined as director of strategy of equine initiatives.

"We are excited for Dr. Wulster-Radcliffe to join our growing Equine Programs," said Nancy Cox, Vice-President for Land-grant Engagement and Dean of the College of Agriculture, Food and Environment. "Her experience working with industry and education partners will help continue the momentum of this signature program."

Most recently, Wulster-Radcliffe served as Senior Director for Industry Partnerships for Purdue For Life Foundation and Chief Executive Officer for the American Society of Animal Science (ASAS). While in her ASAS position, she created and implemented strategic plans, designed and implemented business models, and grew several coalitions. She received her B.S. in in Natural Science, Meat and Animal Science from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and her M.S. and Ph.D. in Animal Science: Reproductive Physiology from Virginia Tech.



"I can't think of a better place to join the Equine Programs team than the University of Kentucky. I am looking forward to working with the Equine Programs team to grow the program and advance the land-grant mission," said Wulster-Radcliffe. "My passion for horses is what pushed me to pursue a career in animal science, it is exciting to finally combine my passion and my career."



Korie Burgess has joined the Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment advising team with a primary focus on Equine Science and Management. Burgess earned her Bachelor's degree in Agriscience Education from Auburn University and her Master's in Agricultural and Extension Education and Evaluation at Louisiana State University.

When asked what she was most excited about in her new role, Korie said, "I am so excited to begin working with faculty, staff and students within the Equine Science and Management program. I am most excited about helping students achieve their goals and aspirations, grow academically, personally and professionally and become the next generation of leaders within the agricultural industry."

Hi! I'm **Heather MacKenzie**, the newest UK Ag Equine Programs Intern. I am what you would call a non-traditional student in my senior year of the Equine Science and Management Program. After spending time in Human Resources then moving on to run-

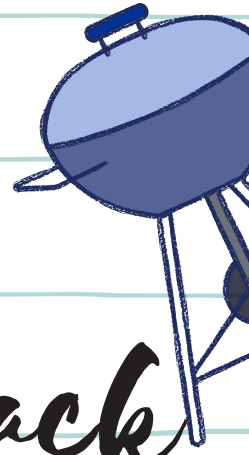
ning a family-owned Celtic pub, I made the decision to pursue my passion of horses full time.

I finished my Associates of Science in Ohio then transferred to the University of Kentucky, and now call Lexington home. Horses have been in my life for as long as I can remember; they are a part of who I am. Thoroughbred racing, sales and breeding are my primary background. I currently help manage the family Thoroughbred racing business, work 2-year-old in training sales and pinhook to pay my way through college.



I am excited for the opportunity to intern within UK Ag Equine Programs and learn behind-the-scenes of what makes this amazing program work. The opportunities and networking within this program and university are endless; I look forward to exploring as many as I possibly can. Throughout my time here, I am excited to develop my knowledge and help with extension, recruitment and communication. I look forward to being able to further my career, while making a positive impact on the industry and drawing new people into the Thoroughbred world. This experience will continue to guide me down the correct path to reach as many humans and horses as possible.

UK AG EQUINE
PROGRAMS PRESENTS



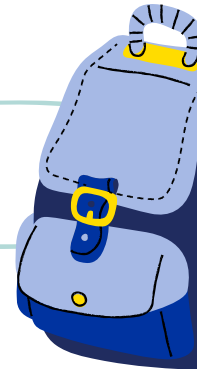
Equine Welcome Back BBQ

Come chat with our teams
and clubs to learn more!



AUG. 24 | 5p.m.
E.S. Good Barn

EVERYONE IS WELCOME



Join us for friends, food and fun!



UK Equine Students earn KEEP scholarships

Source: edited news release, May 25

The Kentucky Equine Education Project Foundation and The Race For Education proudly announce that more than \$33,000 in scholarships were awarded to Kentucky equine students for 2023. The KEEP Foundation's board of directors approved scholarships for 16 students attending equine programs at universities across the Commonwealth, five of which were awarded to UK equine students. All 2023 scholarship recipients are students currently enrolled at a university or college in Kentucky in either an equine and/or agriculture-related major or their parents work in the equine industry. UK equine students awarded the 2023 Race For Education KEEP Foundation Scholarship include:

- Jaida Alee
- Leo Foo
- Taylor Nackers
- Matthew Reidy
- Maddie Stephens

UK EQUINE STUDENTS TRAVELED TO IRELAND TO LEARN FROM WORLD-CLASS EQUINE OPERATIONS

By Holly Wiemers



Here, participants stand with legendary trainer Aidan O'Brien, center, at his Ballydoyle facility. Photo courtesy Ballydoyle.

Recently 11 students in the University of Kentucky's Equine Science and Management undergraduate degree program embarked on a once-in-a-lifetime study abroad opportunity to visit and learn from the best of Ireland's equine industry.

The all-star itinerary May 6-16 included some of the world's top Thoroughbred racing and breeding operations, sport horse facilities and college equine programs. The trip culminated a spring semester course within the UK Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment's equine program.

Fernanda Camargo, associate professor and equine extension specialist in the Department of Animal and Food Sciences, and Holly Wiemers, communications director for UK Ag Equine Programs, led the 10-day trip. It included stops at Karlswood Farm, Gordon Elliott Racing, the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprises, Cooley Farm, Curragh Racecourse, Kildangan Stud, Irish National Stud, Ballydoyle and Coolmore Stud. Participants also learned about history and culture, touring castles and sites and trekking on horseback along the coast.

"It is humbling to have the best equine operations in the world open their doors and host us with so much interest in our students, and be so candid about their day-to-day operations, their beginnings, what has worked or failed for them and why they do what they do the way they do it," Camargo said. "One thing the places we visited

all had in common was the awe-inspiring love and respect for the horse, and how they impact humans' lives. We all left Ireland a little more in love with these majestic animals that have meant everything to us in Kentucky."

The group's first stop was Karlswood Farm, home of Olympic medal-winning showjumper, coach and international horse producer Cian O'Connor. The farm focuses on a holistic approach to excellence in and out of the arena. Its core belief is "Success is reward for effort."

Students next visited the famous Gordon Elliott Racing stable. The Cheltenham Gold Cup, Grand National and Royal Ascot winning racehorse trainer began his racing career as a teenager, becoming a prolific rider, and later went into horse training and has gained global attention with many winners since, particularly with the Thoroughbred, Tiger Roll, who won two Aintree Grand Nationals.

Students then traveled to Northern Ireland to the Enniskillen campus of the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprises. CAFRE provides the widest range of equine courses in Ireland, courses which have been developed through balancing the needs of the industry with the career aspirations of students. Its stated aim is to assist the development of a competitive equine industry and give its students an insight into the many different local and international equine-related opportunities available. The group spent two days there, learning about the various programs on the 136-hectare rural estate.

Traveling back into Ireland, the group then visited Cooley Farm, a very unique type of enterprise in the horse industry and home to one of the world's leading sources of top-class horses for the international stage, especially in show jumping and eventing.

They followed that stop with a visit to the prestigious Curragh Racecourse, home to one of Ireland's most renowned flat tracks. According to its website, the vast open grassy plain of The Curragh is at the very center of Ireland's Thoroughbred horse industry and the racecourse, in addition to regular race days, hosts all five Irish flat-racing Classics, including the oldest, The Irish Derby, originating in 1866.

Students also toured Kildangan Stud, Godolphin Ireland headquarters, known worldwide for Thoroughbred racehorse breeding. In addition to touring the vast operation, students also learned more about the prestigious and highly competitive Godolphin Flying Start program, a two-year management and leadership training program that immerses trainees in the global industry of Thoroughbred horseracing. The University of Kentucky has had several students in the program since its inception more than two decades ago.



Participants at Karlswood. Photo by Holly Wiemers.



Karlswood barn. Photo by Kaelynn Corl.



Karlswood barn. Photo by Holly Wiemers.



Gordon Elliot Racing. Photo by Holly Wiemers.



Gordon Elliot Racing. Photo by Grace Hamilton.



Gordon Elliot Racing. Photo by Holly Wiemers.



A multiday visit to the campus of the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprises. Photos by Holly Wiemers.



Another stop on the docket was the famous Irish National Stud and Japanese Gardens, the only breeding operation in Ireland open to the public and place to visit many classic winning horses of the past. INS, home to famous stallion Invincible Spirit, recently launched an interactive and award-winning educational experience about the Irish horseracing.

One of the highlights of a trip that was chock full of top-notch experiences was an added stop at Ballydoyle Stables where Aidan O’Brien is a private trainer for Coolmore Stud and the farm’s associates. O’Brien is widely acknowledged as one of the greatest horse racing trainers of all time. In 1996, he became Ireland’s youngest ever Champion Trainer, a title he has now held continuously since 1998.

The last stop of the educational tours was with Coolmore Stud, a global leader in Thoroughbred racehorse breeding. Owned by John Magnier and situated in the heart of the Golden Vale on over 7,000 prime acres of Ireland’s finest limestone land, Coolmore provides the perfect environment for breeding and raising Thoroughbreds. Students learned more about its business operations, breeding facilities, conservation efforts and toured its private museum showcasing the operation’s accomplishments.

STUDENT PERSPECTIVES

“As someone who is pursuing their passion for the Thoroughbred industry at the University of Kentucky, the chance to expand my education in Ireland was an incredible opportunity,” said senior Grace Hamilton. “The opportunity to meet leaders in the industry and visit premiere facilities through the site visits was invaluable to me.” When asked what her two most memorable visits were and why, Hamilton named Ballydoyle and the Irish National Stud. “The opportunity to tour Ballydoyle, an exclusive private training center, and meet Aidan O’Brien, one of the best Thoroughbred trainers in the world, was an unparalleled experience. And as someone interested in applying to the Irish National Stud course for next spring, it was an incredible opportunity to visit the facility in person,” she said.

Ballydoyle turned out to be a favorite stop among students.

"My favorite stop on the trip had to be Ballydoyle. The farm is extremely difficult to get into, so just being there was incredible. As an added bonus, we were fortunate enough to meet Aidan O'Brien. He is one of the most humble and genuine professionals I've ever met. He spent a great amount of time explaining his operation, answering all of our questions and giving us the most valuable advice," said senior Emily Johnson.

"I am so grateful for all the amazing farms we got to see and the professionals we got to meet," she added. "The education abroad in Ireland was more than I ever could have imagined. We got to visit some of the best equine facilities and speak with some of the best equine professionals, not just in Ireland, but in the world. The knowledge that we gained is truly invaluable and something I will use throughout my career."

Senior Monica Egnazzo listed Ballydoyle as well as Coolmore as her two favorite stops. "This trip truly was beyond what any equestrian or student studying the equine industry could have dreamt of. We not only explored the greatness of the Irish Thoroughbred and sport horse industry but got to expand our knowledge of an unfamiliar culture and return to America with new relationships and networks," she said.

Egnazzo also said she appreciated getting to compare the Coolmore operation in Ireland with the U.S. one in Kentucky, a personal experience as a former intern at Coolmore in the U.S.

"The equine study abroad experience offered both personal and professional growth opportunities. My time in Ireland broadened my understanding of a different culture, their food and joy for life," said senior Gabrielle DiLemme. "Professionally, I have learned about other techniques in the equine industry and gained contacts for potential future connections.

"One of the most memorable moments of the trip and something I will cherish forever is when we met Aidan O'Brien. Meeting someone of that caliber who was welcoming and kind was so refreshing, and I will permanently remember his advice surrounding living day-by-day and celebrating the little moments," she added.

DiLemme also pointed to her CAFRE visit as a highlight. "It was amazing to have the opportunity to tour their facilities and learn more about their equine program. There were several similarities between their program and ours; however, it was interesting to learn about their racing, eq-



uitation and breeding pathways. I especially appreciated gaining more knowledge on the steps the college is taking in sustainability. In our ever-changing world, it is essential to be adaptable and make positive changes," she said.

For some students, the trip opened their eyes to other opportunities in the global equine industry.

"I absolutely loved our study abroad trip. For me personally, this has allowed me to open my mind and possibly changed my career plans. Before, I was set on working within the Thoroughbred industry, specifically with retired racehorses. However, our tour at Cooley Farm sparked an interest in sport horses that I would like to explore deeper," said senior Victoria Kupets.

"Cooley Farm was easily my most memorable visit on this trip," she added. "I loved the atmosphere that Mr. Sheane and his wife have created. They focus on buying and selling jumpers and eventers. Their goal is to produce good sport horses that they can sell to professionals or sell into good programs. They also mentioned how they will follow each horse throughout their entire life, even if they get re-sold. This was something that I was extremely appreciative of because it tells me that they truly care for their horses and their success. I loved the organization of their facility and how well they treat their horses. Every single horse in their barn was calm, quiet and happy. I will never forget this experience."



Kildagan. Photo by Holly Wiemers.



Kildagan. Photo by Holly Wiemers.



Kildagan. Photo by Holly Wiemers.



Irish National Stud. Photo by Holly Wiemers.



Irish National Stud. Photo by Holly Wiemers.



Irish National Stud. Photo by Holly Wiemers.



Coolmore. Photo by Holly Wiemers.



Trekking on the coast.

KENTUCKY EQUINE SURVEY REVEALS RESILIENCE OF STATE'S EQUINE INDUSTRY

By Holly Wiemers

The University of Kentucky and the Kentucky Horse Council, committed to both safeguarding and promoting the well-being of equines and equine agriculture in the state, recently collaborated on the [2022 Kentucky Equine Survey](#). The report gathered data on all Kentucky horses, ponies, donkeys and mules.

According to the survey, the Commonwealth of Kentucky is home to 209,500 equine and the most populous breed is Thoroughbred, followed by Quarter Horse and Walking Horse. The total value of equine and equine-related assets in the state was \$27.7 billion in 2022, up more than 18% from 2012. This is true even though there are currently almost 14% fewer equine living in the Commonwealth than in 2012.



Photo courtesy Mark Pearson.

Jill Stowe, professor and agricultural economist for the University of Kentucky Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment Department of Agricultural Economics led the survey, a follow-up to the initial study completed in 2012. The U.S. Department of Agriculture National Agricultural Statistics Service implemented the survey. It was conducted in partnership with the Kentucky Horse Council and with support from the Kentucky Agricultural Development Board, the Kentucky Thoroughbred Association and other equine-affiliated organizations. Data collected between July and October 2022 was analyzed to determine core population demographic breakdown and economic information related to the equine industry in the commonwealth.

"In the past 10 years, Kentucky's equine industry has seen areas of contraction along with areas of growth," Stowe said. "Although the total number of equine and equine operations has decreased, the average value of equine has increased. Additionally, revenues for equine operations increased more than expenses, a promising metric for commercial operations. Overall, this report reinforces the economic significance of equine agriculture, which remains vibrant and strong as a signature industry in Kentucky."

The Kentucky Equine Survey illustrated that equine are present throughout the commonwealth and that the industry needs supporting businesses, such as veterinarians and farriers, as well as fencing, feed, bedding, insurance, farm equipment, pharmaceuticals providers and specialized educational opportunities, among others.

The survey also demonstrated that Kentucky's equine industry, particularly in the central Bluegrass region, is an economic cluster. Economic clusters are important contributors to an area's economy; previous study results justify the support and enhancement of the state's equine industry.

"Though the equine numbers in Kentucky have declined slightly over the past decade, this survey reinforces there are many reasons for optimism, specifically with regard to equine welfare," said Sarah Coleman, KHC executive director. "A smaller supply of equine, coupled with the decline in nonpaid transfers, suggests that the potential for horses to become unwanted and at risk has lessened."

UK and KHC in partnership with NASS completed a comprehensive Kentucky equine industry study in 2012, the first in more than 30 years. Survey creators intend to do follow-up studies every 10 years to accurately monitor

the state of the industry in Kentucky.

“Equine agriculture is a signature industry for Kentucky,” said James MacLeod, UK Ag Equine Programs director and researcher in UK’s Gluck Equine Research Center. “This second decennial survey will provide critical information to enable informed decision-making by equine industry leaders, public policy makers, veterinary health professionals and people considering equine-related business investments.”

Stowe explained that Kentucky’s equine industry experienced significant changes in the past decade, including emerging from the Great Recession in 2008-2009, navigating a global pandemic in 2020-21 and recovering from multiple natural disasters in 2021 and 2022; all facets of the industry have had to adapt to a rapidly changing landscape, she said.

“The challenges faced—and their outcomes—are not unique to equine in the commonwealth,” she said. “Nearly all production livestock in the state, and throughout the United States, have been experiencing the same trends, for a multitude of reasons.”

While all breed numbers experienced declines from 2012 to 2022, the average value of equine increased, even after adjusting for inflation. This inflation-adjusted average value of equine increased for nearly all breeds, as well as in 82 of Kentucky’s 120 counties.

The number of equine operations in the state declined 11.4%, which triggered corresponding declines in total operation acreage (18.6%) and equine-related activity acreage (15.9%). In addition, the number of acres held in land preservation programs was down 3.9%.

Kentucky’s decline in equine and equine operation numbers mirrors those found nationwide by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Census of Agriculture. The contraction in Kentucky’s equine industry is similar to beef cattle production across the nation, which is at its lowest level since 1962.

An important trend for commercial equine operations is the marked increase in income and sales over the past 10 years. Expenses have increased, but at a lower rate than revenues. After adjusting for inflation, operating expenses, not including labor, were just marginally higher than in 2012 and capital expenditures were up 131%. Labor expenses (payroll and non-wage benefits) increased approximately 134%.

Study highlights include:

- Though there are currently fewer equine living in the Commonwealth (209,500) than in the 2012 study (242,400), the total value of equine and equine-related assets in Kentucky increased from \$23.4 billion in 2012 to \$27.7 billion in 2022.
- Kentucky is home to approximately 31,000 equine operations.
- Acreage devoted to equine use in Kentucky is 84.1% of that in 2012 (900,000 acres in 2022, compared with 1.1 million acres in 2012).
- Total equine-related income from sales and services for equine operations in 2022 was almost \$2.1 billion, up from \$1.1 billion in 2012, while expenses have increased from \$1.2 billion to \$1.6 billion; 82% of operating expenses are spent in Kentucky.
- The top 10 most populous breeds in the commonwealth are Thoroughbreds (48,500), Quarter Horses (35,000), Walking Horses (28,500), donkeys and mules (13,500), Saddlebreds (12,000), Mountain Horse breeds (10,500), Standardbreds (9,200), Warmbloods (7,000), pony breeds (6,400) and Miniature Horses (6,100).
- The state’s top-five primary uses include trail/pleasure riding (62,500), broodmare (33,500), idle, retired or otherwise not working (32,500), growing horse (foal/weanling/yearling) (22,000), and competition/show (20,000).
- There were 12,500 workers reported on Kentucky equine operations during 2022. This includes 6,300 full-time and 6,200 part-time employees. Total payroll expenses amounted to \$322 million.

UK TO HOST SIGNATURE INDUSTRIES CAREER FAIR IN SEPTEMBER

By Jordan Strickler



The University of Kentucky Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment will host the 2023 Kentucky Signature Industries Career Fair. The Sept. 28 event highlights two of the state's most iconic industries, equine and bourbon.

UK Ag Equine Programs has held an annual career fair for over a decade. In 2022, the program initiated a partnership with the James B. Beam Institute for Kentucky Spirits to create the Kentucky Signature Industries concept. This year's fair will continue the collaboration to expose students to part- and full-time jobs, internships and volunteer opportunities in both industries.

"The Signature Industries Career Fair is a pivotal event that brings together job seekers and employers with a common mission, to help the equine and distilling industries continue to thrive," said Savannah Robin, internship coordinator for UK Ag Equine Programs. "We are excited to host an event of this magnitude again this year and eager to see our students and alumni continue to shine as they display their professionalism in this capacity."

The fair will take place in the UK Gatton Student Center from 2-5 p.m. EDT. The event is open to any college student in the state interested in the equine, distilling, wine and brewing industries, as well as related areas such as finance, hospitality, supply chain, engineering, accounting, tourism, communication and more. Last year's fair drew 60 employers and more than 300 students.

"The many professional opportunities and exciting career paths in Kentucky's equine and bourbon industries make this a very special event for all participants; students and employers alike," said James MacLeod, director of UK Ag Equine Programs. "The success of last year's inaugural Signature Industries Career Fair exceeded expectations and there is every indication that this year will be even better."

The impact of both industries on the state is significant. The most recent Kentucky Equine Survey reported that the state is home to 209,500 horses on 31,000 operations. The bourbon industry generates more than 22,500

jobs with an annual payroll topping \$1.23 billion. The impact goes further with more than \$286 million in annual tax revenue in the commonwealth attributed to bourbon, combined with both industries generating substantial tourism revenue and visitors to Kentucky from around the world.

“Completing the Beam Institute ushers in an unparalleled time in Kentucky bourbon workforce development,” said Seth DeBolt, director of the Beam Institute and the Distillation, Wine and Brewing Studies undergraduate certificate program. “With 95% of bourbon distilled and matured in our state, the Signature Industries Career Fair is set to be bigger and better than ever for the next generation of distillers and for employers.”

Registration is free for all students. Employers and student attendees may register via Handshake based on their industry association: <https://students.ca.uky.edu/KY-signature-industries>.



HISTORIC \$100 MILLION GIFT WILL CATAPULT UK COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND ENVIRONMENT

Continuing a “legacy like no other,” late University of Kentucky alum and former trustee Carol Martin “Bill” Gatton bestowed a transformational gift of \$100 million to the UK College of Agriculture, Food and Environment through The Bill Gatton Foundation.

The gift, which was announced on May 25 by UK and the foundation, is contingent upon UK Board of Trustees’ approval at its June meeting. It is not only the largest to the university in its nearly 160-year history but is also believed to be the largest to a college of agriculture in the United States.

To honor Gatton’s parents, Edith Martin and Harry W. Gatton, Sr., the college will be renamed as the Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment.

“This is a transformational gift that will have a profound impact on CAFE and the University of Kentucky,” said UK President Eli Capilouto. “It will be a cornerstone in our efforts – and our singular mission – to advance Kentucky in everything that we do. Like Mr. Gatton did, we dream of a Kentucky tomorrow that is healthier, wealthier and wiser than it is today. This gift reflects his profound belief in this institution to be a partner for progress in our capacity and commitment to advance Kentucky.”

Gatton, who passed away in April 2022, was a lifelong philanthropist and supporter of UK. He was a 1954 graduate of the university’s College of Commerce, and he went on to become an incredibly successful businessman,



L-R: Nancy Cox, UK Vice President for Land Grant Engagement and CAFE Dean; Danny Dunn, Bill Gatton Foundation Trustee; Dr. Eli Capilouto, UK President; Mike Richey, former UK Vice President for Philanthropy and Alumni Engagement. Photo by Matt Barton

entrepreneur and investor.

Gatton's gift to CAFE is the latest in a series of generous donations that have transformed the university, including record-breaking gifts to the Gatton College of Business and Economics, the university's Gatton Student Center and scholarships for students with unmet financial need through the UK LEADS initiative.

Gatton's impact on the University of Kentucky exceeds \$180 million. He is the university's single largest donor. Nancy Cox, UK vice president for land-grant engagement and UK CAFE dean, expressed gratitude for the generosity of the Bill Gatton Foundation.

"Our college has served Kentucky and beyond for over 150 years with 'user-inspired science,' aiming to push boundaries in education and service," Cox said. "We are grateful for the confidence placed in us by the Gatton Foundation, which will allow us to both accelerate our land-grant mission and create new programs to serve our citizens."

Cox said the college will form a task force of faculty and staff members who will consider how the gift will be used to support the Gatton Foundation's vision for scholarships, academic programming, infrastructure and research.

Gatton's background

Gatton's strong ties to agriculture trace back to his childhood on a farm in Bremen, Kentucky, in Muhlenberg County. From an early age, he developed a strong work ethic, selling roadside produce during summers and gradually expanding his sales and clientele. Gatton's knack for business was evident even during his time as a student, as he began selling cars at a local dealership, a venture that later contributed significantly to his success.

While Gatton's agricultural background primarily stems from his father's side of the family, his mother, Edith Martin, came from a banking lineage with deep roots. Drawing inspiration from both his parents and his firsthand experiences on the farm, Gatton acquired invaluable knowledge about entrepreneurship, leadership and the value of hard work. During his freshman year at UK, he put these skills into action and served as the state president of the Kentucky FFA, exemplifying his commitment to applying his agricultural expertise in practical ways.

The generous gift, as recognized by Bill Gatton Foundation Trustee Danny Dunn, is a testament to Gatton's unwavering belief in the transformative power of higher education.

"Mr. Gatton believed that investing in the University of Kentucky was investing in Kentucky's future," said Dunn. "This gift marks a significant milestone for the foundation, representing its first major donation since his passing. This gift symbolizes the foundation's commitment to honoring Mr. Gatton's passion for Kentucky and his desire to support its agricultural community as an essential way to advance this state."

Former UK Vice President for Philanthropy and Alumni Engagement, Mike Richey, who was a close friend and confidant of Gatton's, said this gift from the foundation would have held immense importance to Gatton. "For the last few years of his life, Mr. Gatton never wavered in his interest and desire to do something philanthropic for agriculture in Kentucky through the College of Agriculture, Food and Environment," Richey said. "This wonderful gift shows he has done that very thing."





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