

College of Agriculture, Food and Environment



Monthly College Newsletter | February

Message from the Dean



One of the things UK has done in recent years to enhance employee engagement and improve overall management and leadership is to gather faculty and staff feedback through the UK @ Work Survey. It turns out that these surveys, which begin in 2015, meshed well with some college initiatives also undertaken in 2015 through our strategic plan, "Building Our Future on the Land-grant Legacy."

The UK@Work survey, which was conducted again in 2017 and 2019, works well with our college plan and gives useful information on many measures of job satisfaction and employee engagement. These surveys are important to our college and university as staff and faculty job satisfaction is critical to our success. If you are an extension

professional working across Kentucky, you may not feel this survey is relevant, but we especially value your responses, now and in the future.

In preparation for our college plan, covering 2015-2020, we conducted listening sessions with the entire CAFE family and over 1,000 external stakeholders. Our goals were framed following these important and enlightening conversations. Specifically, Goal 3 *'recruit, develop, and retain exceptional faculty and staff who are leaders in*

expanding knowledge to improve the quality of life and sustainability of the human and physical environment includes several objectives focused on improvements to the faculty and staff experience. This planning has led to the implementation of several initiatives throughout the college, and we interpret your feedback through the UK@Work survey to indicate progress toward this goal and highlight areas we should work on going forward.

The UK@Work survey focuses on sustainable engagement; empowerment; communication; working relationships; stress, balance and workload; diversity and inclusion, leadership, working environment and university culture. Data from each year is evaluated and compared to past survey results.

In 2019, overall, CAFE saw significant improvement across several questions related to leadership, working relationships, career development, diversity and inclusion, and empowerment. For example, we had significantly more favorable responses to the question "Colleagues in my department are encouraged to come up with innovative solutions to work-related problems" than in 2017. When compared to UK units overall, CAFE results generally reflected more favorable responses across questions associated with sustainable engagement.

We are certainly proud that our college results were positive in many ways. As always, there are opportunities for improvement. Faculty and staff responded that stress reduces their effectiveness, they want more regular feedback on their job performance and have some uncertainty in reporting dishonest or unethical practices.

In 2020, there will be a focus on helping people in our college community find productive and healthy ways to reduce stress and gain a better work-life balance. We will work with departments and units to develop regular performance feedback. We must also ensure our people know there are resources available and that they are fully empowered to report instances if they have a concern or complaint. Several resources are available for faculty and staff, and we will be working to provide additional resources in 2020.

Current resources include:

- [UK Human Resources Work-Life](#)
- [CAFE Business Center Employee Resources](#)
- [CAFE Office of Diversity](#)
- [UK Bias Incident Support Services](#)
- [UK Office of Institutional Equity and Equal Opportunity](#)

Approximately 48% of faculty and staff responded to the 2019 UK@Work survey, down from 2017 but higher than in 2015. Several CAFE units achieved 100% participation. Thank you to those that participated, and we will be looking for ways to encourage others to participate in the future. These surveys are important as we work to make a great place to work even better.

The 2019 survey results and action plans will be placed on our [website](#) over the coming weeks. This site also contains the 2015 and 2017 results and action plans. Unit-level reports will be provided to CAFE chairs and unit directors with at least 10 respondents.

UK CSA Registration

Registration for the 2020 season of the Community Supported Agriculture project is now open. All UK faculty, staff and students are eligible to enroll in the program, which provides members with fresh produce from May 21 through Oct. 15 from the organic farming unit of the UK Horticulture Research Farm. Share costs are \$650 for faculty and staff prior to March 1, \$660 throughout March, and \$670 from April 1 on. The student cost is \$584, \$594 and \$604, respectively. The number of shares is limited and offered on a first-come, first-served basis. This year, UK is offering vouchers toward the cost of a CSA share as a benefit to its employees who are on a UK health plan. Voucher codes are available via the UK Health and Wellness Dashboard through April 20. To learn more about taking advantage of the voucher benefit for UK employees, visit the UK Health and Wellness page, <https://www.uky.edu/hr/benefits/csa-voucher>. To register for the CSA, go to <https://sustainableag.ca.uky.edu/csa>.

Local Food Systems Summit

The second annual Kentucky Local Food Systems Summit is scheduled for Feb. 26 at the Gatton Student Center. Participants will learn about issues including agricultural research, market development, community nutrition and public policy. Registration is \$75 and covers full participation in the summit, a locally sourced lunch and a networking reception with light refreshments. The cost of parking is included for off-campus guests. To register, or to learn more about the summit, visit <https://conta.cc/35oB4IQ>.

James B. Beam Institute Industry Conference

The James B. Beam Institute for Kentucky Spirits at the University of Kentucky will offer an inaugural industry conference Feb. 27 in the UK Gatton Student Center. To register, to go <https://beam-institute-conference.eventbrite.com>.



Universities Fighting World Hunger Summit

The Universities Fighting World Hunger Summit is March 19-20 in the UK Student Center. The event brings together college students, faculty, administrators and hunger activists from around the world to discuss ways they can collectively reduce worldwide hunger. Registration and more information about the event is available online at www.uky.edu/summit2020.



In the news

Stephanie Richards has been named Cooperative Extension arts specialist. This position is a collaboration between CAFE and College of Fine Arts and is one of few such positions in the country. Richards is used to blazing new trails having been hired in 2005 in Pike County as the first fine arts extension agent in the nation.

Plant pathologists **Aardra Kachroo** and **Pradeep Kachroo** have discovered a new pathway that helps soybeans fight off diseases. Their findings recently were published in Nature Communications. More information about their finding is available [here](#).

Lynne Rieske-Kinney, entomology professor, was recently quoted in Science magazine: [Aphid-munching beetle could help save hemlock forests](#)

Jennifer Hunter, director of Family and Consumer Science Extension, and **Alex Elswick** were featured on [UK at the Half](#) regarding Alex's role as the nation's first extension specialist for substance use prevention and recovery.

Cooperative Extension Service names regional directors



Natasha Lucas, of Beattyville, has been named the Central Region director. Lucas currently serves as one of seven district directors and has more than 20 years of experience in extension at the county and district levels.



Anna Porter, of Louisville, has been named the West Region director. Porter currently serves as one of seven district directors and has more than 30 years of experience at the county and district levels.



Daniel Wilson, of Tyner, has been named the East Region director. He currently serves as one of seven district directors and has more than 13 years of experience at the county, district and state levels.

This is the first step in a new administrative structure announced last fall after a comprehensive review of the service was completed. All three started their new roles on Feb. 1, while continuing to fulfill their district director duties until area extension directors are hired. Further details about the area extension director hiring process can be found at [extension transition website](#).

Awards/Honors

Lou Hirsch, left, director of agriculture and medical biotechnology undergraduate studies, and **Dave McNear**, Plant and Soil Sciences associate professor, recently received the Great Teacher Award.

Nominated by students and presented by the UK Alumni Association, it is one of the most prized awards for UK teachers with only six given each year.



Ole Wendroth, professor in the Department of Plant and Soil Sciences, recently became president of the Soil Science Society of America. The society is an international scientific organization with more than 6,000 members and 1,000 certified professionals focused on advancing soil science.

Seth DeBolt, horticulture professor, and **Czarena Crofcheck**, biosystems and agriculture engineering professor, are part of a multi-university \$24 Million Partnership to Advance Next

Martin Nielsen, associate professor at the Gluck Center, was recognized with a Winnie Award at the 2019 International EQUUS Film Festival for best educational film. He developed an 18-video series of parasite control videos for horse owners to help educate them about parasitology best practices.

Spotlight

Uneeda Bryant

Associate Professor | Veterinary Pathologist, UKVDL

We asked Uneeda to share a little about her passions, her career path and what led her to us.

Tell us about your background and what led you to your current role at UK?

I earned my doctor of veterinary medicine degree in 2002 from Tuskegee University College of Veterinary Medicine, in Tuskegee, Alabama. Before entering veterinary school, I desired a career in small animal medicine with a goal of my owning a private practice working with dogs and cats. I didn't know anything about pathology before entering vet school and knew little about all the various specialty fields that were available. I loved pretty much everything about pathology and to put the cherry on the top, I had awesome pathology professors that kept us engaged and interested. After being introduced to pathology, there was no question what I wanted to do. The weekend after graduating, I met two UK veterinary pathologists at a regional pathology conference who were looking for a student/resident interested in pathology. I applied, interviewed and was chosen to enter the program. I immediately started a post-doctoral/residency in pathology at the UKVDL, where I had hands-on training with several awesome pathologists and a plethora of animal species despite being in the horse capital of the world. After my training, UK offered me an assistant professor faculty position in veterinary pathology. I am now a tenured, associate professor of veterinary pathology.



What is your favorite thing about working in CAFE?

This is difficult to narrow down; I love many things about working in CAFE. Everyone is very welcoming. The UKVDL faculty and staff are like extended family, and that's important when you have no biological family around (except my 4-year-old daughter).

My favorite component of working here is my community outreach that extends to institutions, colleges and universities, K-12 schools, organizations, conferences and more across the Midwest. For the past 15 years, I've been sharing my profession with youth

through the USDA-APHIS AgDiscovery program. Several years ago, I was invited to set up at the Fayette County District Science Fair for thousands of attendees. That's when the first elementary school science teacher showed an interest in the lab exhibit and invited me to Stonewall Elementary for their annual science night. This school holds a special place for me, and I haven't missed a science night with them yet. I now annually book 30-35 events, including preschools, equine forums, science centers, cattle association conferences and even barbecue festivals. I do this to educate audiences about this non-traditional veterinary medicine career path. I am amazed how many adults are shocked to learn that veterinary pathology is a profession and an option for veterinarians. I never thought I would go this way, but I did and there's no turning back. Don't get me wrong, I love my live furry friends, but nothing tops pathology for me.

What is one thing about yourself that might surprise people

I love to bake. I am a novice, but I desire to learn more and to master my craft. Baking is cathartic for me. I don't necessarily eat a lot of sweets, but I love baking them and having someone else enjoy them. Personally, I'm the one who would skip dessert and get a second plate, while others dive into the desserts.

Calendar of Events

February 5

Last day to drop without a W or change grading option

February 14

Valentine's Day

February 22

UK Founder's Day

February 22-29

National FFA Week

February 25

Mardi Gras

February 27

[James B. Beam Institute Industry](#)

[Conference](#)

[Bourbon and Distilled Spirits Career](#)

[Fair](#)

February 29

Leap Day

Helpful Links

[Giving](#)

[College Weekly for Faculty & Staff](#)

[College Weekly for Students](#)

[The Ag Magazine](#)

[The Ambassador](#)

[Contact Us](#)



[Read: The Ag Magazine](#)



