Dear Friends,

I am happy to say that I am official. On Oct. 4, I had the deep honor of being installed as the 18th president of the University of Louisville. I know many of you were among the more than 2,500 people who attended that wonderful event. It was a day that my family and I will never forget, and I want to thank everyone involved for making it so special. I am humbled to lead this institution. I realize the great responsibility that comes with this job whenever I step foot on campus or out in the community. Whether I’m talking to students, faculty, staff, fans or alumni, I’m reminded of what UofL means to our city and the commonwealth. I believe we are a university on the rise, and our best days lie ahead.

We are having an eventful fall semester, and the university has received significant attention for the progress it is making on many fronts. We should all be proud of the work that UofL researchers are doing to help overcome paralysis. We recently received several grants, which are bolstering our efforts to improve the environment and helping us provide additional information about the health problems caused by tobacco use.

Our College of Business has formed a unique partnership with our athletics department, resulting in a program that teaches ethical leadership practices. Out in the community, the university has established ties with a public entity and several neighboring academic institutions to help speed medical advances to the marketplace.

Of course, making UofL a great place to learn, to work and to invest remains our highest priority. Toward that end, we recently celebrated the rededication of our Student Activities Center, which looks magnificent after a $40 million renovation and expansion.

With its facelift complete, the updated SAC has a variety of new spaces for our students to study, socialize, eat and relax. It has state-of-the-art conference and meeting rooms for faculty and staff to interact and plan. And its makeover, funded in part through agreements with our corporate partners, demonstrates the university is a worthy place for investment.

I feel very positive about the direction we are moving in as a university community. The important thing going forward is that we remember that we are one university, one team. Together, we can reach the goals we have set, and, together, we will overcome any obstacles in our way. Go Cards.

Neeli Bendapudi
President, University of Louisville

INAUGURATION MARKS FRESH START

The Oct. 4 inauguration of UofL President Neeli Bendapudi was a not-to-be-missed opportunity for many people.

“I love Dr. Bendapudi. I’m excited for this day and I’ve been waiting for it,” said employee Kelly Carrico. “It’s a big day for UofL — a fresh start.”

A crowd of more than 2,500 attended the celebration, held on The Oval in front of Grumeweyer Hall.

Provost Beth Boehm told attendees that the inauguration recognizes “ancient and enduring” academic traditions. She also had high praise for Bendapudi: “She is a breath of fresh air,” said Boehm. “She has restored the university’s optimism.”


In her inauguration speech, Bendapudi talked about the importance of leadership, ownership and the courage to tackle big ideas.

“We Are UofL,” cannot just be a hashtag or a slogan. It is our declaration of leadership and ownership,” she said. “We will all behave as owners of the university, because we are. Now, in the shadow of The Thinker, I want you to think with me big, bold thoughts, daring to imagine what would happen if we succeed, which we must and which we will.”

UOFIL, RED BIRD CLINIC PROVIDE ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE IN APPALACHIA

Tucked away in the mountains of southeastern Kentucky is the Red Bird Dental Clinic, a beacon of hope for many residents of Clay, Bell and Leslie counties.

Geographic and economic conditions create limited access to oral health care — the next closest dentist is a 45- to 90-minute drive.

“Without Red Bird, most people here would simply have no dental care,” said Revelle Berry, a long-time patient of the clinic.

Since the collaboration started, dental students have helped provide care for almost 600 patients and have completed nearly 700 procedures.

The Clinic includes dental and medical components. It grew out of the Red Bird Mission Inc., which started in 1921 with a private school, and expanded to include job training, clothes closet, food pantry, adult education and senior citizen services.
A GIANT STEP FOR SPINAL INJURY PATIENTS

Kelly Thomas, a 24-year old who was paralyzed after a 2014 car accident, is walking again thanks to research conducted at the Kentucky Spinal Cord Injury Research Center at UofL. In September, the astounding and heartwarming story made headlines around the world.

Thomas’ groundbreaking progress is the newest development in an epidural stimulation research program at UofL. The initiative takes aim at quality of life — and even recovery — following spinal cord injury. This latest study builds on initial research, published in The Lancet in 2011, that documented the success of the first epidural stimulation participant who recovered some motor functions.

“Being a participant in this study truly changed my life, as it has provided me with a hope that I didn’t think was possible after my car accident,” said Thomas. “The first day I took steps on my own was an emotional milestone in my recovery that I’ll never forget.”

Susan Harkema, PhD, the study’s author, professor and associate director of the Kentucky Spinal Cord Injury Research Center said, “This research demonstrates that some brain-to-spine connectivity may be restored years after a spinal cord injury.”

She also explained how her team’s work could have a significant impact. “We must expand this research — hopefully, with improved stimulator technology — to more participants to realize the full potential of the progress we’re seeing in the lab, as the potential this provides for the 1.2 million people living with paralysis from a spinal cord injury is tremendous.”

UOF L EARN S TOP SPOT FOR SERVING AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS

UofL is a top university for serving the needs of African American students, according to a national study released in September.

A report card from the University of Southern California’s Race and Equity Center named UofL as one of three universities who tied with the highest score, a 3.5 on a 4-point scale. Scores were based on:

- An institution’s percentage of black undergraduates and how that compares to the overall black population, ages 18 to 24, in that university’s home state
- Equity between the percentage of black men and women as it compares to the percentage of men and women across all racial and ethnic groups nationwide — about 56 percent women and 44 percent men
- The six-year graduation rate for black students as it compares to an institution’s overall graduation rate
- The ratio of black students to black full-time professors

UofL President Neeli Bendapudi said she is proud of the ranking but noted the university is not standing still in its efforts to improve in all areas of diversity.

GEMS IS 30 YEARS OLD: PROGRAM HELPS KENTUCKY TEENS EASE INTO MEDICAL CAREERS

When she was in 8th grade, Breathitt County native Sunshine Smoot decided she wanted to be a pediatrician. She heard about Guaranteed Entrance to Medical School (GEMS), a program that smooths the path for talented Kentucky students to transition into medical careers.

Smoot earned admittance to GEMS in 1997 and graduated from the UofL School of Medicine in 2006. She is now a pediatrician at Juniper Health in Campton, Kentucky.

For 30 years, GEMS has helped students like Smoot by providing mentoring and support. To date, nearly 300 Kentuckians have participated in the program.