



# THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

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Dear Friends,

To say the year 2020 was like no other would be an incredible understatement. I have been so impressed with the ways I've seen our Cardinal Family adapt and show the world that our bold mission is moving forward safely and responsibly.

UofL's successful return to campus amid the continuing coronavirus outbreak has been a noteworthy accomplishment and one that required tremendous planning and cooperation. In many ways, we have been a model for other institutions. Due to our entire campus community's adherence to the protocols we put in place, we were able to offer on-campus learning in a safe and healthy environment.

Despite the unpredictability of the current climate, the university has continued to provide an outstanding education, conduct groundbreaking research and engage with our greater community. In fact, 2020 brought growth in both research and enrollment. It was our most successful research funding year yet, topping out at \$170 million. Our enrollment reached more than 23,000 students, which is our highest total in more than 20 years. You'll find more impressive accomplishments listed in this report.

Furthermore, on Dec. 12, the university held a **historic, virtual commencement** ceremony to ensure our more than 5,300 graduates were recognized and given as close to a traditional commencement as possible. With spring, summer and fall 2020 graduates all included, it was one of the largest commencements in university history. After reading some of our graduates' profiles included in this report, I think you'll be reminded that UofL truly has some of the best, brightest and most resilient scholars. They epitomize the Cardinal spirit, and I'm confident that they, like so many of our alumni, will go on to make an incredible impact here and beyond.



Go Cards!

**Neeli Bendapudi**  
President, University of Louisville



## GRADUATE EARNS HIS DEGREE WHILE SERVING AS A LOS ANGELES POLICE OFFICER

Before he had the chance to finish his degree at UofL, Louisville native William Dorsey Jones Jr. moved to Los Angeles in the spring of 2006 to pursue a career in entertainment. While he was out there, he found another passion – service.

That led him to join the Los Angeles Police Department. He spent eight years on patrol and the past three years working as a community relations officer within the department – the **third largest in the U.S.**

Jones eventually returned to UofL to finish his studies online and graduated Dec. 12 with a degree in communications. He acknowledges the challenges along the way, especially those encompassing this year such as serving as a police officer during the social justice movement and presidential election. "Being an African American police officer and from Louisville has given me a very unique perspective," he said.

Not only does he work as a police officer, he also has a family, including a wife who has been working

from home during the pandemic, and a 6-year-old son who has been learning from home. As though his plate isn't full enough, Jones also started a nonprofit organization, called "Officers for Change," in August 2020. The objective is to mentor at-risk youth in low-income communities and "positively affect my community," he said.

Despite now living over 2,000 miles away, Jones was determined to get his degree from UofL and nowhere else. In fact, moving to Los Angeles only amplified his passion for the university and the city.

"Growing up in the west end of Louisville poor, UofL is what brought our family and community together. My mother and (late) father were and are die-hard Cardinal fans and growing up, I've always been a huge Cardinal fan," he said.

Jones plans to leverage his new degree by working his way up the ranks in the LAPD and he plans to expand his nonprofit organization.

## A LOOK BACK AT AN UNPRECEDENTED YEAR

Despite the incredible setbacks of 2020, UofL has continued to lead the way in the fight against COVID-19 and has earned a bevy of accomplishments this past year. Take a look at some of our top achievements:

- On **December 15**, UofL Health became the first hospital in Kentucky, and one of the first in the U.S., to begin administering Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccinations to frontline health care workers.
- UofL received \$8.5 million in funding from the U.S. Department of Defense to develop and test a nasal spray to prevent COVID-19.
- In a year filled with racial justice protests centering on the death of Louisville's Breonna Taylor, we declared UofL's objective of becoming the nation's **premier anti-racist university** and created a **scholarship in memory** of Taylor.
- This year, UofL was identified as **one of only three universities** in the U.S. that provides equal access to Black and Latinx students, as well as a top school for Black students **pursuing a criminal justice degree**.
- UofL became one of just **28 public/private partnerships** funded by the Department of Labor to build a program that will prepare students for jobs of the future.
- UofL ranked as the **best college in Kentucky** based on statistics from the U.S. Dept. of Education.

- UofL was once again named a **"Best of the Best"** for LGBTQ friendliness.
- Raise Some L shattered a fundraising record this year, **generating a sevenfold increase over 2019**.
- UofL's U.S. News & World Report ranking jumped by **16 points this year**.
- UofL placed first in the state and in the top 10 nationally in the **annual recycling competition**.
- The UofL Women's Basketball team was selected to represent the U.S. at the **World University Games**.

If we can achieve such an impressive list of accomplishments in a challenging and crisis-laden year, just imagine what we'll do next.

## \$8.5M RECEIVED TO DEVELOP NASAL SPRAY TO PREVENT COVID-19

The University of Louisville received funding from the U.S. Department of Defense to develop a nasal spray to prevent serious viral respiratory infections such as COVID-19 using Q-Griffithsin, a drug compound developed and co-owned by UofL.

The one-year project, funded through an \$8.5 million agreement from the DoD, includes developing the spray, testing the formulation in lab studies and conducting a Phase I clinical trial. The researchers expect the spray to be used to protect frontline health care workers, military personnel living in close quarters and other essential workers, as well as vulnerable people for whom a vaccine might not be fully protective.

Kenneth E. Palmer, director of the UofL [Center for Predictive Medicine](#) for Biodefense and Emerging Infectious Diseases and the Helmsley Charitable Trust Endowed Chair in Plant-based Pharmaceutical Research at UofL, is leading the project, known as PREVENT-CoV. "The idea is to deliver the antiviral agent to the location in the body where the virus is known to replicate first, the upper respiratory tract," Palmer said.

Q-Griffithsin (Q-GRFT), an analog of the biologic griffithsin, discovered at the Center for Cancer Research, NCI and co-owned by UofL, the University of Pittsburgh and the National Cancer Institute, is a potent anti-viral protein that acts against multiple coronaviruses, including MERS, SARS-CoV and SARS-CoV-2, as well as pandemic threat viruses such as Nipah virus. An application using Q-GRFT to prevent HIV infection already is in Phase I clinical trial.

The UofL researchers will develop and manufacture the nasal spray, to be used once a day to prevent SARS-CoV-2 infection, in collaboration with Lisa Rohan and Sharon Hillier, at the University of Pittsburgh and Magee-Womens Research Institute, Barry O'Keefe, at the National Cancer Institute and Donald Lo and colleagues at the NIH National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences. The team first will formulate the compound for use as a nasal spray, then will test the newly developed spray in the lab using human samples and tissues and in animal models.

"We are pleased to work with the University of Louisville and hopeful about the prospect of developing Q-Griffithsin to combat COVID-19," said Douglas Bryce, the DoD's joint program executive officer for chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear defense. With positive results, the researchers would seek U.S. Food and Drug Administration Emergency Use Authorization for deployment of the formulation, a step that the researchers anticipate could happen as soon as the end of 2021.



## STUDENTS REFLECT ON GRADUATING IN A GLOBAL PANDEMIC

UofL's winter 2020 commencement was a virtual ceremony that featured traditional elements like "Pomp and Circumstance" and messages from the president, deans and provost. Despite some pandemic weariness, our graduates were resilient and they were not willing to let the lingering crisis rain on their milestone.

"It's been a wild ride. I'm grateful for this experience and I believe this has made me mentally stronger," said Charice Johnson, a Louisville native graduating with a communication degree. She notes that the beginning of 2020 was a bigger challenge, particularly the transition to work-from-home in March. She balanced her job with Student Affairs, with her education, with raising a fourth grader, who is also learning from home.

Meherunissa Naseem, a biology major/psychology minor from India, also believes she is graduating with sharpened resiliency. "Though finishing my degree in the middle of a pandemic and not having a traditional ceremony or celebrating with friends and family is not what I have expected, I still feel fortunate to be able to accomplish the biggest dream of my life," she said.

Kendall Ruber, a graduate student from Butler, Kentucky, describes the experience of finishing her degree in the middle of a global pandemic as simply, "surreal." "At the beginning of the pandemic, when we had to convert to online

instruction on a whim, my classes seemed like a blur, and time seemed to move both fast and slow at the same time," she said. "As the months have passed, it still seems like the concept of time doesn't exist anymore. I still have trouble processing the fact that my graduation occurred and that eight months have passed since we were last in the classroom together."

From surreal to "overjoyed." That's how Tony Hobson, who is graduating with an organizational leadership and learning degree, describes finishing his degree amid this unusual environment.

"I am so overjoyed it's actually happening," he said. Hobson, who started his college experience in the early 1990s, keeps himself optimistic by looking for meaning behind these challenges. "At the end of the day, if we're going to get through these tough times, there has to be a purpose," he said.



## DECEMBER GRAD TOOK 21 YEARS TO EARN DEGREE. SHE'S NOT STOPPING NOW

In 2004, Kelly Rowan Burrell was one class away from earning her degree in sociology. While at UofL, she had a baby born in 2000 (who today is a sophomore at UofL). She met and married her husband, Jeremy. From 2000 to 2004, five close family members died, and the grief was overwhelming. In addition, Burrell was diagnosed with a condition defined as "like multiple sclerosis" that had her moving from class to class in a motorized wheelchair. When her health took a sudden downturn, she had to put off the one class she still had to take to earn her degree.

Slowly, as the years passed and her family grew to four children while she worked full-time at Humana, her last class "turned into many," she said. Still, she was determined to finish. "I kept going back over the years," she said. "As requirements changed, I kept going. When I owed tuition, I paid what I could until my balance was fulfilled and immediately, I re-enrolled."

After all, when she arrived at UofL in 1999 as "an 18-year-old full of promise," she was the recipient of a prestigious MLK Endowment of Peace award and a Woodford R. Porter Scholarship. She joined Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc. in 2002. Her father, Kenny Rowan, had "put Cardinals in my crib," she said.

In 2019, she arranged with her College of Arts & Sciences advisor to take her final three classes. "I completed all the steps to start classes in

January 2020," she said. "During that first class, COVID-19 hit, and we had to move quickly to virtual classes. Including that class, I have taken the last three classes I needed to graduate, one per term, during COVID."

And she did it despite working from home and having four children at home who each had individual virtual learning needs: A freshman in high school (14-year-old Ajani Nicole), a second grader (8-year-old Hayden Reese), a pre-schooler (5-year-old Katherine Joy) and Lorenzo, who lived both on campus and at home.

Burrell's next challenge will be a master's degree (first she has to decide among public health, Pan-African Studies or Women and Gender Studies) and eventually a Ph.D. "UofL helped prepare me for life," she said. "Over the last 11 months, UofL has helped me show my children that Mommy, now 39, never gave up, no matter what."

