Welcome from the President

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At the University of Kentucky, undergraduate scholarly inquiry has always been important. However, over the past five years, such studies have been growing significantly, both in quality and in quantity. The number of students participating in the abundant opportunities formally and informally supported by many individual faculty members, departments, colleges, and the University through the many programs of its eUreka! office is increasing rapidly. The number of UK students applying and accepted to present at the National Conference on Undergraduate research has grown each year, placing UK ahead of all of our peer institutions in this important measure of undergraduate research. And the size and quality of UK’s Journal of Undergraduate Scholarship, Kaleidoscope, has also been growing. This year is no exception.

Once again, the range of interests and inquiries reported in Kaleidoscope is astonishing. This issue contains reports of studies in the humanities, the social sciences, the natural sciences, and fine arts and business. It is also noteworthy that the authors include first-year students, seniors, and those in between. The fact that scholarly inquiry begins for some students as soon as they come to UK is wonderful. Such inquiry should not be thought of as limited to capstone or departmental honors projects. It is clear from many educational research studies that engaging in undergraduate scholarship as early and as often as possible has an extremely beneficial impact on a student’s education. The benefits include, among others, increased retention, higher grades, better learning, better placements in jobs and graduate schools, and closer relationships with faculty members that yield more personal advising and mentoring. I urge every undergraduate to take advantage of the mentored scholarly opportunities at UK.

One article in this issue especially caught my attention, because it directly relates to Kentucky. John Gaehlian’s submission on native son Alben Barkley interests me, not only because it is such well-written original research, but also because it bears witness to a point that I have made many times: UK is an extraordinary resource for the Commonwealth. The research that is conducted here is of value to the entire state; it is not esoteric or unrelated to all of our interests. As John so ably explains, Barkley was of enormous importance to President Truman and to the nation as a whole, but his contributions have been largely forgotten. Now, thanks to John, we can have a much better understanding of that crucial time in our history and the role that a Kentuckian played in it.

Research such as John’s would not be possible without the dedication and support of the many faculty members who mentor undergraduates in their scholarly inquiries, and who serve as referees, judges, and editors of our various competitions and publications. These opportunities are what make the undergraduate education available at UK so valuable, and I thank again all of the faculty members who make these experiences both possible and beneficial.