

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COLLABORATIVE

A Letter from EDC Leadership

The Economic Development Collaborative (EDC) was founded on a simple but powerful idea: the University of Kentucky is strongest when its people, ideas and efforts are connected in service of a shared economic future.

Over the years, the EDC has grown into a space where faculty, staff, students and community partners come together to learn from one another, build relationships and advance economic development across campus and beyond. That collaborative spirit remains at the heart of the EDC's work today.

As the University's economic development efforts have continued to evolve, the EDC intentionally took time to listen, reflect and assess how it could best support this work moving forward. The review process outlined in this report reflects a thoughtful commitment to clarity, alignment and impact, grounded in feedback from across the network.

We are encouraged by the direction the EDC is taking. The refined focus on convening, connecting and supporting work already underway across campus strengthens the Collaborative's ability to add value while honoring the expertise and leadership of its members. This evolution builds on what has come before and positions the EDC for continued impact.

We are grateful for the many individuals who have contributed to the EDC's growth and success, and we remain deeply committed to its ongoing work. As this annual report reflects, the EDC's next chapter is rooted in collaboration, shared purpose and a continued commitment to advancing economic development in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. All are invited to participate.

With appreciation and optimism,

George Ward and Melody Flowers
EDC Steering Committee



EDC HISTORY

2019

The **formation of the EDC** and the implementation of the bold ideas.

2020

First two **UEDA Awards of Excellence wins** — four wins total

2023

UK receives “**Innovation & Economic Prosperity**” designation from the APLU.

2024

EDC launches **business engagement CRM** to support economic development.

2024

Growing Our Own workshops launched as the first Connect 120 program.

2019

First **UEDA Awards of Excellence finalist**—nine national finalists total

2021

UK launches **Construction Business Accelerator**.

2023

First cohort of **OneUK** partners announced at the State of the EDC by President Capilouto.

2024

New **business engagement dashboards** enabling greater university wide coordination.

2025

A year spent **in review** - listening and reflecting, preparing for the next 5 years.



A NEW ERA OF THE EDC, BUILT ON YOUR INPUT

Over the past year, the EDC took a deliberate pause to reflect on how well it was serving its network and advancing economic development across the University of Kentucky. **As the University continues to Advance Kentucky Together, it was important to ensure the EDC's role was clear, focused, and aligned with where the work is headed.**

This review was not about starting over. It was about listening, learning, and strengthening how the EDC supports the important work already happening across campus.

1

Listening Across the Network:

To better understand what was needed, the EDC engaged members, partners, and campus stakeholders through conversations, meetings, and ongoing dialogue.

We took note of what we heard:

Through our conversations and feedback, several key opportunities emerged:

1. Clarifying the EDC's purpose and focus to better guide engagement.
2. Defining roles between EDC-led projects and member-led activities for greater clarity.
3. Expanding opportunities for connection, collaboration, and shared resources.

2

3

Turning Feedback into Action:

This feedback guided intentional changes to the EDC's focus and structure, sharpening how it convenes, supports, and amplifies economic development efforts across campus.

*The Economic Development Collaborative seeks to **bring the university together by connecting people, sharing knowledge, and leading efforts that advance economic impact** in alignment with UK's Advancing Kentucky Together initiative and regional and state goals.*



THE (NEW) MISSION



THE (NEW) PROCESS

Looking ahead, the EDC will focus on **two core roles**:

1

Quarterly Convening & Resource Sharing

The EDC will host four meetings annually to highlight resources, strengthen connections across campus and share information from economic development experts.

2

Targeted Leadership on Select Initiatives

The EDC will take on select projects that directly support and strengthen economic development efforts already underway at the University.

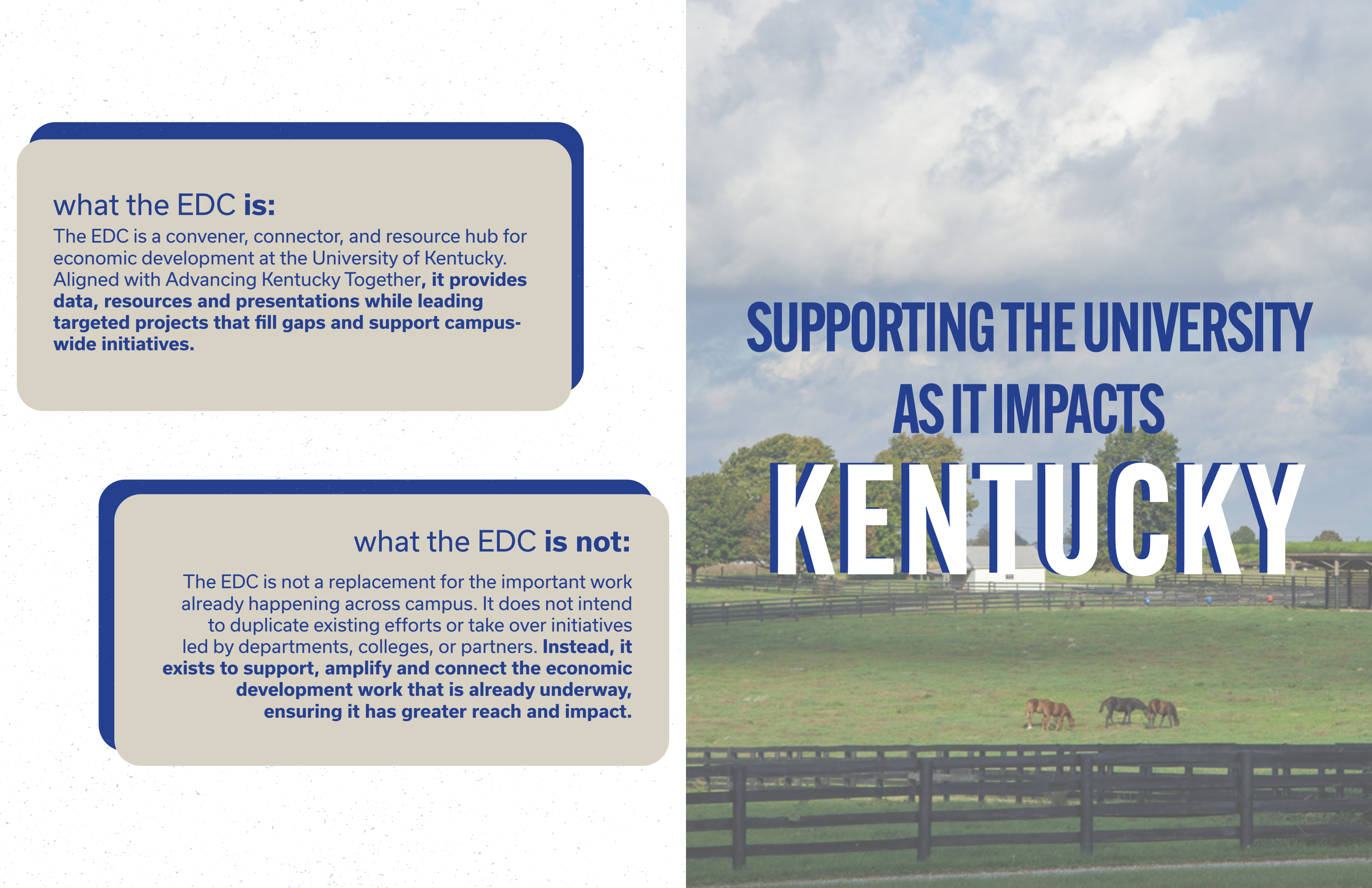


what the EDC **is**:

The EDC is a convener, connector, and resource hub for economic development at the University of Kentucky. Aligned with Advancing Kentucky Together, **it provides data, resources and presentations while leading targeted projects that fill gaps and support campus-wide initiatives.**

what the EDC **is not**:

The EDC is not a replacement for the important work already happening across campus. It does not intend to duplicate existing efforts or take over initiatives led by departments, colleges, or partners. **Instead, it exists to support, amplify and connect the economic development work that is already underway, ensuring it has greater reach and impact.**

A scenic view of a Kentucky farm. In the foreground, a dark wooden fence runs across the frame. Behind the fence, a green field is visible with three horses grazing. In the background, there are trees and a white building under a cloudy sky.

SUPPORTING THE UNIVERSITY AS IT IMPACTS KENTUCKY

2025 EDC NEWS

The following covers news around
EDC led initiatives in 2025.



OneUK has been integral to building the type of business engagement culture we want at UK.”— Kim Kluemper



LOCKHEED MARTIN, TURNER CONSTRUCTION NAMED ONEUK PARTNERS

Lockheed Martin and Turner Construction Co. are the newest partners in the University of Kentucky's strategic collaboration program OneUK.

OneUK provides a long-term, coordinated and holistic engagement experience between the university and select businesses through a mutual commitment to broaden and deepen their collaboration with UK. The program aims to strengthen relationships with strategic partners across all UK colleges, centers and institutes. This collaboration in talent, innovation and support is intended to be mutually beneficial for both the university and its partners, ultimately advancing the economic interests of the Commonwealth.

Lockheed Martin employs more than 1,500 people across Kentucky to meet key global security needs and support missions around the world. The company has partnered with the Commonwealth for more than 15 years, contributing to some of the nation's most critical efforts across air, land, sea and space.

In April, UK Innovate and Lockheed Martin announced a collaboration focused on leveraging cutting-edge expertise to drive innovation in engineering, materials, energy and manufacturing technologies.

That partnership expanded in August, when Lockheed Martin opened a new Engineering Center of Excellence at UK's Coldstream Research Campus. The facility adds up to 70 full-time jobs to the Coldstream community and further strengthens the connection between the company and the university.

Turner Construction Co., one of the largest construction management companies in the United States, has a long history of building landmark projects in Kentucky and around the globe. The company has a longstanding relationship with UK, having completed more than 30 projects on campus including work on the Albert B. Chandler Hospital and currently the Rankin Health Education Building and Agricultural Research Building projects.

In addition to building the university's physical infrastructure, Turner is helping to build Kentucky's economic foundation through its partnership with UK on the Construction Business Accelerator program. The initiative equips local contractors and small construction-related businesses with the knowledge, mentorship and resources needed to grow and compete for major projects. By combining UK's educational expertise with Turner's industry leadership, the program strengthens the state's construction ecosystem and ensures that the university's investments also benefit the local business community.

Lockheed Martin and Turner Construction Co. join six other OneUK collaborators, which include Appalachian Regional Healthcare, Bullard, Catalent, Fidelity Investments, Fischer Homes and Valvoline Global.

One UK

Fidelity

FISCHER HOMES

Bullard

Catalent

LOCKHEED MARTIN

Turner
Construction Company

Valvoline
Global

ARH
Appalachian Regional Healthcare

UK, KEY ORGANIZATIONS PARTNER FOR SPRING INSTALLATION OF 'GROWING OUR OWN' WORKSHOP SERIES

The University of Kentucky, in collaboration with several key partners, has launched the spring installment of the "Growing Our Own" workshop series.

Supported by the UK Office of Land-Grant Engagement, the initiative aims to strengthen and grow small, Kentucky-based businesses across the Commonwealth by equipping participants with the knowledge and resources needed to thrive.

The workshop series is a result of a partnership between Commerce Lexington, the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet, the Kentucky Finance and Administration Cabinet, KY Apex Accelerator, America's Small Business Development Center of Kentucky, UK Procurement and Economic Engagement, UK Cooperative Extension Service and the UK Economic Development Collaborative. The Office of Land-Grant Engagement's support of this initiative through the Engagement Grant Program underscores the commitment to expanding collaborative efforts and addressing important public needs throughout Kentucky.

"Growing Our Own" is a comprehensive, free, three-week workshop series aimed at helping small businesses thrive in Kentucky's landscape. Each session was held at Commerce Lexington in Lexington, KY, while also being available virtually via Zoom.

The Spring 2025 series took place on the following dates:

April 17: How to Do Business with the University of Kentucky

April 24: Knowing Your Kentucky Small Business Resources

May 1: Understanding Which Business Certification Is Right for You

"UK Economic Engagement remains committed to removing barriers and creating opportunities for small businesses across Kentucky," said Marilyn Clark, UK economic engagement manager. "We recognize that navigating procurement with a large institution like UK can be complex, and that's why we are excited to offer these workshops at Commerce Lexington. By hosting them in a central location and providing virtual access, we are making sure that businesses throughout the state have the tools they need to succeed."

The "Growing Our Own" initiative is designed to intentionally equip and provide resources to individuals within Kentucky, fostering successful entrepreneurship across the state. By participating in these workshops, attendees gained crucial knowledge and skills to navigate the complexities of doing business within the state, enhancing their potential for success. In turn, the workshop series assisted the state in growing a base of sustainable businesses, increasing the economic viability of each county and fulfilling UK's land-grant mission of advancing Kentucky.

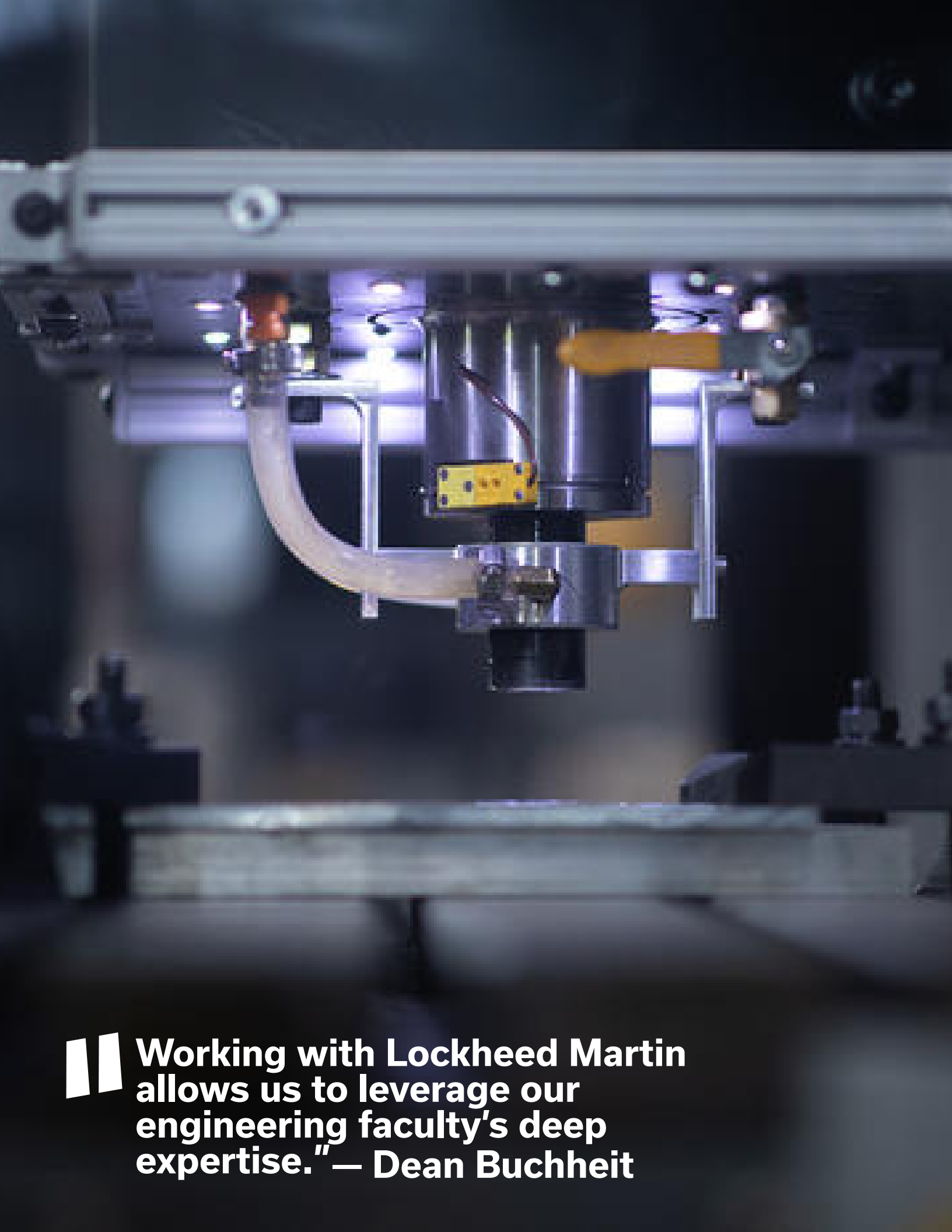
UK remains committed to creating opportunities for small businesses in KY."
— Marilyn Clark



2025 NETWORK NEWS

Highlights of economic development activity
involving EDC members. These items reflect
member-led efforts.





UK, LOCKHEED MARTIN TO PARTNER, DRIVING INNOVATION IN ADVANCED ENGINEERING

The University of Kentucky, through UK Innovate, is teaming up with Lockheed Martin to leverage cutting-edge expertise to drive innovation in advancing engineering, materials, energy and manufacturing technology.

Lockheed Martin is a global defense technology company driving innovation and advancing scientific discovery. With 121,000 employees worldwide and more than 70,000 engineers, scientists and technologists, the company seeks to increase access to engineering and manufacturing education opportunities to help fill the need for technologists of the future.

"We are excited for the potential of this partnership and the collaborative expertise involved. This exemplifies the University of Kentucky's commitment to translating research into real-world solutions and UK Innovate's pledge to bolster that through connecting resources," said Landon Borders, senior associate director for innovation, economic development and industry partnerships at UK Innovate.

"Our skilled workforce has been built in partnership with strong pillars in the Central Kentucky community, like the University of Kentucky," said Robert Bockrath, deputy vice president of Lockheed Martin Lexington Programs. "As the demand increases for innovative solutions quicker than ever, it is critical to continue to develop and foster our collaboration for future generations of engineers for years to come."

Lockheed Martin has more than 1,500 employees in Kentucky, to meet key global security customer needs and support their missions around the world. The company has worked with the state of Kentucky for more than 15 years. This has helped some of the nation's most important missions across air, land, space and sea.

"Working with Lockheed Martin allows us to leverage our engineering faculty's deep expertise, creating an ideal environment for impactful innovation," said Rudy Buchheit, Rebecca Burchett Liebert Dean of the UK Stanley and Karen Pigman College of Engineering.

UK researchers are working to develop new manufacturing technologies and materials in the Next Generation Additive Manufacturing Research Laboratory, and are at the forefront of heat shield technology for spacecraft in the Gas Surface Interactions Lab.

The Pigman College of Engineering has made a strategic effort to address aerospace needs in Kentucky and beyond. It offers the only undergraduate degree in aerospace engineering in the state.

In 2024, four of Kentucky's top exports were related to materials and manufacturing: aerospace products and parts (\$13.3 billion), motor vehicles (\$3.7 billion), motor vehicle parts (\$1.7 billion) and basic chemicals (\$1.3 billion).

"Research drives innovation that can directly benefit Kentucky's industries. Working with Lockheed Martin offers a powerful collaboration between world-class industry insight and the expertise we have here on campus. It's the kind of partnership that not only accelerates breakthrough technologies but also strengthens our commitment to solving real-world challenges," said Kim Sayre, research and development partnerships manager, UK Innovate and Pigman College of Engineering.

Working with Lockheed Martin allows us to leverage our engineering faculty's deep expertise." — Dean Buchheit

UK ANNOUNCES FAYETTE ALLIANCE AS 2025-26 CORNERSTONE COMMUNITY INNOVATION PARTNER

The University of Kentucky is pleased to announce Fayette Alliance as its next Cornerstone Community Innovation Partner (CIP) for the 2025-26 academic year. Fayette Alliance will maintain an ongoing presence at The Cornerstone, advancing community engagement with students, faculty and staff and deepening the connection between the university and the wider Lexington community. The CIP program is part of UK's Economic Development Collaborative.

This year-long partnership supports The Cornerstone's mission to foster innovation, entrepreneurship and community connection by creating opportunities for collaborative engagement between the university and the surrounding community.

"The Cornerstone was created to be a place where the university and community come together to generate new ideas and partnerships," said Melody Flowers, UK assistant vice president for economic development and real estate. "Through the CIP program, we're able to connect students, faculty and staff with community leaders like Fayette Alliance to work on the issues that shape Lexington's future."

Fayette Alliance promotes smart, sustainable and equitable growth in Lexington-Fayette County through land-use advocacy, education and research. The organization works to ensure thoughtful planning and zoning policies within Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government, produce data-driven research and build a community of informed advocates who are committed to policies that preserve Lexington's vibrant urban core and productive rural land.

Through this partnership, Fayette Alliance will use The Cornerstone as a physical home for educational programs such as Grow Smart Academy, Grow Smart Academy 2.0 and Smart Growth Ambassadors. The alliance also plans to explore new programming tailored specifically to UK's students, faculty and staff, including office hours, workshops and community events that connect the UK community to civic leadership, urban planning and local government.

"The University of Kentucky's commitment to research, education and community, and its role as a major stakeholder in the growth and development of Lexington-Fayette County create a natural partnership with the mission of Fayette Alliance," said Ethan Wallace, Fayette Alliance's education and community engagement manager.

The Cornerstone building serves as a gateway to the university's emerging arts district, providing a space for idea sharing, programming and events that center on innovation, creativity, design and entrepreneurship. . This partnership will allow students to engage with real-world issues facing Lexington-Fayette County and better understand how urban planning, transportation and land-use decisions impact quality of life and economic vitality.

Fayette Alliance has already scheduled two sessions of its 2025 Grow Smart Academy program at The Cornerstone and looks forward to expanding its reach through this partnership. Longer term, the organization plans to bring new initiatives — such as the Transit Advocacy Academy and Reimagine Lex design contest — to the space, further connecting the UK community with civic leaders, local nonprofits, agricultural stakeholders and other community organizations.

Through the CIP program, we're able to connect students, faculty and staff with community leaders."
— Melody Flowers





"The collaboration is particularly timely, given the current shortage of construction workers."
— Marilyn Clark

UK, WALSH CONSTRUCTION, GOODWILL KENTUCKY LAUNCH PRE-APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

The University of Kentucky, in partnership with Walsh Construction and Goodwill Kentucky, has launched a new Pre-Apprenticeship Program. The initiative, tied to the construction of the UK Cancer and Advanced Ambulatory Building, is designed to introduce participants to careers in the skilled trades through an eight-week, hands-on learning experience.

The Pre-Apprenticeship Program aims to provide job-readiness training, technical skills and exposure to the construction industry. The program serves as a pathway to Registered Apprenticeship opportunities and offers participants a chance to explore construction trades before committing to a full apprenticeship.

"Walsh Construction's pre-apprentice program equips individuals with hands-on skills, mentorship and real-world experience. It builds a skilled workforce that supports essential industries like healthcare and strengthens our communities," said Eric Radlof, Walsh vice president. "This is not just another job for the men and women that participate in the program; it starts their career in the construction industry."

Walsh is collaborating with Goodwill's Lexington Opportunity Center to identify and prepare program participants. Goodwill has referred candidates who have been actively engaged in workforce services and are considered job-ready.

"Programs like this are essential for creating pathways to stable careers and long-term self-sufficiency, especially for job seekers who have faced significant barriers to employment," said Alycia Tidrick, Goodwill Kentucky's director of strategic partnerships. "Goodwill Kentucky is proud to partner with Walsh Construction and the University of Kentucky to offer participants hands-on training, job experience, and a meaningful step toward a brighter future. This kind of opportunity is only possible through true collaboration, and we're grateful for our shared commitment to making it happen."

Participants will receive hands-on training from both tradespeople and management while developing communication and workplace readiness skills. The program will take place in partnership with three subcontractors: Lithko, Besco and Hussung. At the end of the eight-week program, participants may be hired directly by these subcontractors and sponsored into Registered Apprenticeship Programs.

"We commend Walsh Construction for integrating the pre-apprenticeship program into their company's mission. This initiative demonstrates their dedication to supporting the local communities and economies where they operate," said Marilyn Clark, UK economic engagement manager. "The collaboration is particularly timely, given the current shortage of construction workers. According to a 2024 survey by the Associated General Contractors, 94% of construction firms nationwide are struggling to find workers to hire. The Walsh Pre-Apprenticeship Program is paving the way for a solution that could be replicated across the country."

The Lexington launch follows a successful pilot by Walsh Construction in Cook County, Illinois, where all pre-apprentices were hired back onto the project as full apprentices.

UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY AMONG NATION'S 1ST INSTITUTIONS TO PARTNER WITH MICROSOFT ON RESPONSIBLE AI INNOVATION

The University of Kentucky has announced it will collaborate with Microsoft to advance the responsible use of artificial intelligence (AI) and strengthen learning, innovation and care across the Commonwealth.

Operationalized through the university's recently launched Commonwealth AI Transdisciplinary Strategy (CATS AI), Microsoft becomes a corporate partner in the Advancing Kentucky Together (AKT) Network, joining a growing coalition of education, health care, community and civic partners committed to expanding opportunities and improving the lives of Kentuckians.

UK is one of the first institutions in the nation to collaborate with Microsoft in building a comprehensive, stakeholder-engaged framework for artificial intelligence. UK will also receive early access to certain new resources for teaching, learning, health care and discovery. This distinction reflects UK's growing leadership role in developing responsible and scalable models for how AI can support education, research, service and care.

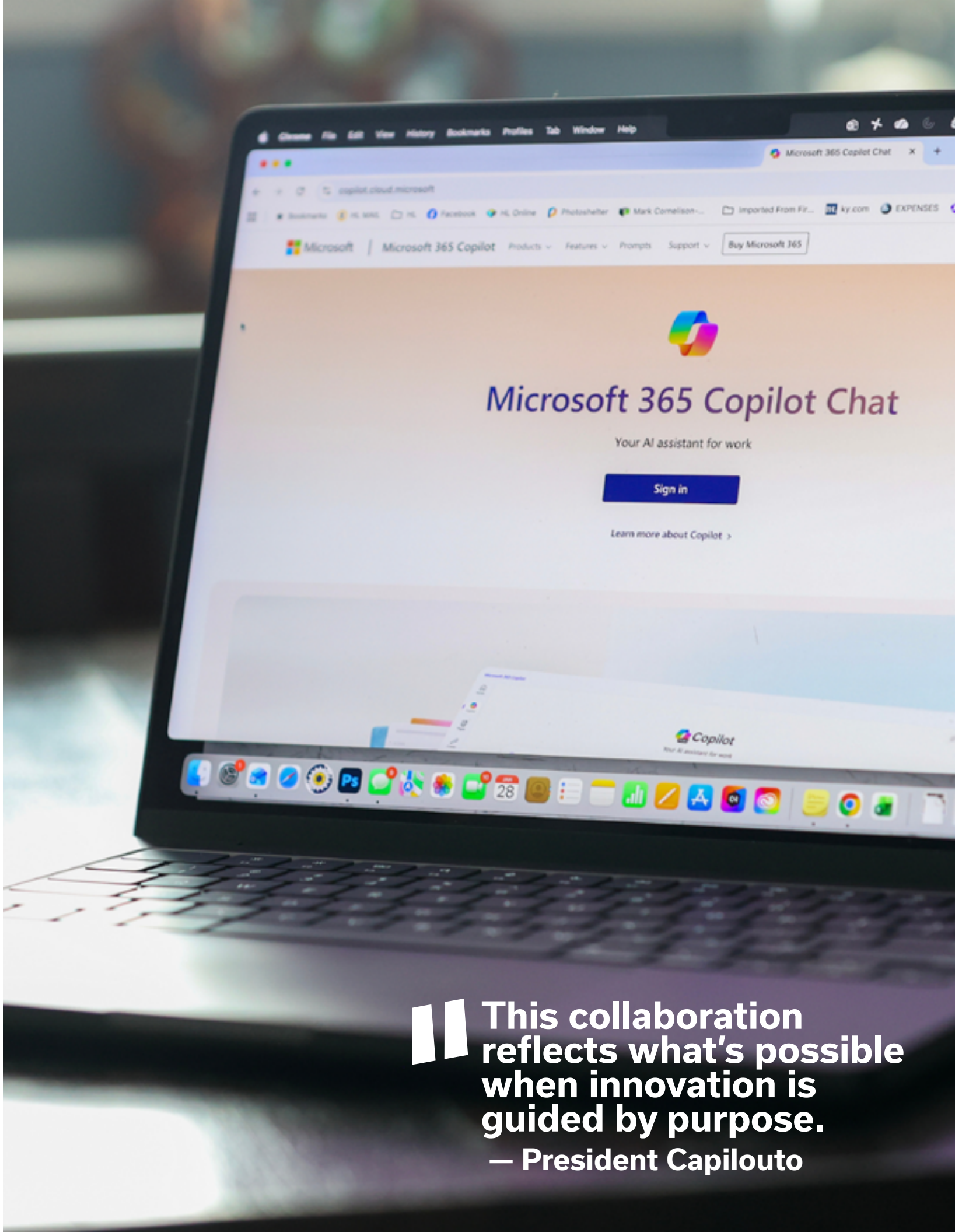
Through CATS AI, UK will provide students, faculty and staff access to Microsoft Copilot, Copilot Studio, Microsoft 365 and the newly announced Agent Store. In addition, UK developers will use GitHub Copilot to deliver internal AI solutions for the school. UK doctors and nurses will use Dragon Copilot to improve patient care. The research enterprise will take advantage of the Discovery Platform to deliver research for various studies.

"This collaboration reflects what's possible when innovation is guided by purpose. Microsoft is helping place Kentucky in the lead — not only in terms of early access to powerful tools but in how those tools are applied to solve real challenges with communities," said UK President Eli Capilouto. "Collaborating on this shared mission will help us do that for Kentucky by ensuring that every student, employee and community we serve has access to the tools driving the future."

The collaboration advances a call-to-action from the University of Kentucky Board of Trustees to make the institution the partner of choice for leveraging artificial intelligence to improve education, health, workforce and community outcomes statewide. Through CATS AI and the AKT Network, UK's collaboration with Microsoft will help ensure Kentucky remains at the forefront of responsible AI adoption and innovation.

About CATS AI

The Commonwealth AI Transdisciplinary Strategy (CATS AI) is the University of Kentucky's comprehensive framework for advancing the responsible use of artificial intelligence in education, research, health care and operations. Led by an institution-wide council of academic, research, healthcare and administrative leaders, CATS AI connects, coordinates and amplifies AI initiatives across UK's 17 colleges, libraries, UK HealthCare, research centers and institutes.



“This collaboration reflects what’s possible when innovation is guided by purpose.”
— President Capilouto

MEET THE TEAM

STEERING COMMITTEE

NED CRANKSHAW

COLLEGE OF
DESIGN

JANA JASINSKI

VICE PROVOST

HEATH PRICE

PARTNERSHIPS

JENNIFER GREER

COLLEGE OF
C&I

JAKE LEMON

PHILANTHROPY &
ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT

MOLLY REYNOLDS

STUDENT SUCCESS

DORIAN HERCEG

UK
HEALTHCARE

IAN MCCLURE

UK INNOVATE &
CATS AI

GEORGE WARD

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
& REAL ESTATE

JENNIFER HUNTER

EXTENSION

DAVE MELANSON

ADVANCING KY
TOGETHER

SUPPORT STAFF (NON VOTING)

AUDREY BARICOVICH

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
& REAL ESTATE

LANDON BORDERS

UK INNOVATE

MELODY FLOWERS

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
& REAL ESTATE

MELISSA BOND

BLUEPRINT KY

ASHLEY CASTORENA

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
& REAL ESTATE

NICOLE KEENAN

STUCKERT CAREER CENTER

JESSICA KOENIGSKNECHT-TALBOO

PHILANTHROPY &
ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT

EDC MEMBERSHIP

The EDC is guided by a steering committee that helps set direction and priorities. At the same time, the EDC is intentionally open to all who are interested. Students, staff, faculty, and community members are all welcome to attend EDC meetings, which are held on a quarterly basis.

Anyone interested in participating or staying informed is encouraged to [**subscribe to the EDC newsletter**](#) for meeting announcements, updates, and opportunities to engage.