

Summary of narrative comments

2024 Faculty Evaluation of the President

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The faculty survey evaluating the President contains the following question:

Please use this space, if you wish, to provide comments regarding President Capilouto's performance. (These comments will be part of the Senate Council's evaluation of the President. The committee responsible for evaluating survey results will use them to provide a summary to the Board of Trustees, Senate Council, and/or the campus community, but the comments themselves will not be presented verbatim.)

There were 433 narrative responses (out of about 870 total responses). The survey states that there will be an evaluation committee, but due to the impending abolition of the Senate, there was insufficient time to establish a committee. This report is usually presented in October each year.

I have summarized the numbers of comments into general areas and provided edited representative samples in each category. These are not “verbatim” presentations, but I have tried to respect the tone of each author. Any identifying information has been removed. I have not included comments which were nonresponsive to the question, conclusory, or otherwise inappropriate. The bulk of the responses related to the restructuring plan involving the Ars and GRs and about the President’s leadership generally. A third group involved research administration. All other categories (Student rights, compensation, diversity) had only a few narrative comments each.

I. Academic restructuring / Changes in regulations

Favorable responses: 26

Representative comments:

- I am fully supportive of the Board of Trustees and President Capilouto's efforts to have the faculty and administration of each College determine their curriculum, and not the University Senate, which in my experience, has no idea regarding my area of expertise or course content. Too bad the Faculty Senate will "summarize" comments, and not present them verbatim.
- I feel strongly that President Capilouto has done a great job leading our University. I believe his recent decision regarding the Senate was put in place to move our University forward and to better streamline program, course and curriculum

changes. The vote of no confidence is unfair and insulting given his many years of service.

Unfavorable responses: 110

Representative comments:

- I believe he has handled the shared governance issue very poorly and has never fully explained the rationale for why these changes need to be taken so quickly and unilaterally. It is hard to trust that he has the best interests of everyone in mind, when we can't understand his motivations. He has done a lot of good for UK over the years, but now he seems to have taken to patronizing the faculty.
- I used to give the president great marks for his leadership. However, his quick and unexpected removal of the University Senate was egregious. He reigned in the engagement of faculty and removed them from the decision making at this University. The fact that this was done with no data, and no evidence in support of their claims while catching the president in lies multiple times is so disheartening that words cannot do it justice. It seems they don't even make their own decisions either. Instead, we are subject to the whims of big business accounting firms that tell our 'leadership' what to do, then they do so without question, and without providing faculty with the data or evidence and lying repeatedly about the rationale and purpose while the rest of the country watches, horrified at the obvious consequences. These are the kind of behaviors that make me shudder when I think about the future of academia at UK and beyond.
- I am saddened by the way the University Senate has been dismantled - I personally don't have a strong opinion on whether the Senate "should" have been restructured in some way or not BUT it was pretty clear that President Capilouto decided it should be dismantled and then made that happen, which is a bit scary. And importantly, I have yet to see a clearly articulated reason WHY the President pursued this - the vague notions of being "more nimble and flexible" as mentioned in the President's emails are not concrete or specific enough to merit these actions, which he surely knew would be viewed negatively by much of our campus community.
- The peremptory attack on faculty governance on the basis of flimsy research about how the structures work is just the culmination of a decade of ignoring collaboration with faculty and striving to undermine faculty authority in areas of its expertise. It opens the door to competition between colleges that will be a detriment to the university and to its students, who will be taught potentially by those who are not specialists in the field. Under the guise of "including more voices," fewer voices will actually be heard and many voices have been ignored already in favor of those the President wanted to hear.

- Although I believe that President Capilouto works hard for the university, I believe he has lost the trust of many of the faculty. He appears to make a show of talking to many people but then selects the opinions that agree with his own and ignores the rest. I do not think that the university will have reasonable faculty governance if the current proposals proceed. I believe that there is need for increasing student and staff voices and for streamlining certain course approval procedures, but the current proposals seem to "throw the baby out with the bathwater" and I think only give the illusion of greater student and staff participation. I also do not think that President Capilouto shows equal respect to all portions of campus. I see him as favoring health colleges and therefore failing truly to meet goals for undergraduate and graduate education.
- I have been appalled at President Capilouto's handling of the changing of the University Senate and governing structure, including the recent, rushed proposed changes to the ARs and GRs. The process has been hasty, irrational, and unclear, while voices of dissent have been ignored or dismissed as irrelevant, culminating in wide-spread distrust in leadership at the university level. This situation could have been handled much more sensibly, responsibly, and with respect to all of the campus community members involved. Instead, it has lead to division and eroded faith that the board or president care at all about the well-being, success, or opinion of faculty, staff, or students.

II. Leadership / Strategic vision

Favorable responses: 37

Representative comments:

- Dr. Capilouto has done an amazing job during trying times in higher education and on this campus. Change does not come easy for many. Trying to move this university into one that is more contemporary and responsive to the needs of KY is difficult. We are lucky to have such a genuine leader as Dr. Capilouto.
- Throughout Dr. Capilouto's tenure as president I feel he has been a passionate and committed servant to this university and to the commonwealth. I believe him to be sincere in his efforts to move the institution forward and keep it financially stable, especially during a time of increased insecurity with public institutions. And so it came as a surprise to me that the recent events surrounding the Board of Trustees immediate push to restructure the current governing and administrative regulations resulting in the abolishment of the University Senate. I feel certain Dr. Capilouto knew that this would not be received well by his faculty and though he did reach out to listen, I would have liked to have seen more of a substantive response whereby some consensus could have been achieved, negating the need for the recent turn of events. Something of this magnitude should have been deliberated with much more depth among all the stakeholders instead of a fast push to get it enacted. I believe

he is a man of his word when he speaks about joining together to solve our differences and work towards a more responsive governing structure and hope that he receives the olive branch from faculty and acts accordingly to mend the fences. I believe our faculty have been hurt by the recent turn of events but I also believe Dr. Capilouto has the skills and resources to make something good come out of situation that is not a good look for our university.

- I appreciate Dr. Capilouto's commitment to being the leader of UK and embodying the mission of the university. I especially appreciate the clear and optimistic communication. This governance issue has been tough all the way around, but necessary to make room for more voices in the decision-making, especially students and staff.
- President Capilouto has dealt with a good amount of turmoil this year- and provided determined, thoughtful effective leadership in the face of intransigence and disrespect by the University Senate Council. He has successfully navigated a potentially hostile legislative environment. I am optimistic about our new governance structures and appreciate his leadership.
- Excellent leadership during a period of challenge including political challenges at state level as well as restructuring internally to meet future needs. I think his actions, particularly those externally such as with state legislature are largely invisible to most faculty yet critically important to the campus.
- While I have not been able to follow the details about governing regulation changes, I sense that President Capilouto wants what is best for us as a university so that our governance structure is more similar to other institutions. His track record in securing resources for our overall campus growth has been impeccable. His presence in discussions about DEI with state legislators has been unwavering. Therefore, I disagree that he is trying to unravel our institution. However, my bottom line message is that President Capilouto is a strong leader and has consistently demonstrated sound judgment and approach to problem-solving. I support him 100%.

Unfavorable responses: 95

Representative comments:

- President Capilouto's broad use of power without first building consensus with faculty is greatly concerning. It also illuminates broader cultural issues at UK that continue to prioritize and privilege a very select few, while harming many. People should always matter more than profit. People should always matter more than protecting power. I am not confident in President Capilouto's ability to prioritize people, share power, and maintain transparency around decision making.

- Dr. Capilouto has made UK a toxic place to work and I fear for the future of this institution. If UK continues down this path I would not send my children to UK for their undergrad education if the faculty continue to be treated as enemies rather than the bedrock of educational excellence.
- I am very sorry to say that I used to be a very strong advocate and believer in the President's leadership and vision and events over the past several months have completely changed my perspective. I honestly know that these words will not matter in the least--I doubt anyone will read them, but I feel it's my responsibility to articulate how sad I feel that my confidence in the President is now gone with the destruction of the faculty voice and Senate. This recent action of essentially doing away with the faculty voice and governance seems so unnecessary and contrary to his collaborative, building style. It's just sad.
- The university rankings are lower under this president's leadership. Transparency and morale is low. Grant submissions are low due to the burden created by this administration and lack of listening to faculty and their needs. Trust has been broken. This president is all about smoke and mirrors. His emails rarely read as genuine. I am disappointed by this president's actions in dividing us rather than uniting us.
- Dissolving University Senate was clearly a highly problematic decision, both in substance and execution. I still can't understand why President Capilouto figuratively slapped the faculty across the face by not at least going through the motions of asking University Senate for input. He is highly aware of optics, so I assume this approach was intentional. I'm used to patronizing, dismissive behavior from the dean of my college, but until now have been committed to serving UK on campus committees and other initiatives (to make some sort of small contributions to the University. President Capilouto has now made clear that these contributions are neither welcome nor valued, at least not from faculty. Given his shabby treatment of UK's faculty, I no longer have any confidence in his commitment to hiring and retaining talented faculty or providing the best possible college education for our students.
- I have been very supportive of the president throughout the years. I always considered him to be fair, measured, and a great asset to the university. I was proud of the work he did and his leadership during COVID-19 and I was boastful when telling others about his leadership. Unfortunately, he seems to have lost his way. He used to listen to faculty, and I mean truly listen, before making decisions. I respected that. I did not always agree, but I respected him for it because he genuinely seemed to have an open mind before coming up with a decision. He seems to have lost his way when he stopped doing that. Transparency, which has been his calling card for years, was suddenly gone. Patience was suddenly gone. Faculty engagement was

suddenly gone. With our university at the lowest point of shared governance, I no longer have confidence and pride in his leadership. The president who was once the beacon of pride to our faculty and university community, will now undoubtedly go down in state history as the president who destroyed faculty governance, tenure and free speech protections, and the desirability of the University of Kentucky as a place of faculty employment. Not the legacy we thought he would leave the university with only a short few years ago.

- President Capilouto has been a severe disappointment in his job performance. I can't think of how he could have done a WORSE job of including faculty in academic development, governance, and goals-sharing. He has prioritized expansion of the medical area of the university's mission to the detriment of everything else. He is not a university president; he is the CEO of a large healthcare concern that happens to have a middling school attached to it. Funding for the university's core educational mission continues to dry up at the state level, and faculty morale is terrible. Poor oversight and anemic governance has left the UK academic colleges in dire straits. All that seems to matter to the president is securing money for healthcare initiatives, new hospital wings, and hospital acquisitions. Meanwhile, as the academic performance and ranking of our university continues to decline, we have become, effectively, an open-admissions state-wide community college. Graduate education in non-medical fields is in an especially precarious position, with no effective leadership. This is a direct result of Capilouto's failure to provide good governance in line with our role as the academic research center for the Commonwealth of Kentucky. We will have a very hard time recovering from this, and maybe we never will.
- I used to have great admiration, trust and respect for President Capilouto. I was sympathetic to his concerns and frustrations regarding the inefficiencies and obstacles to change at the university. But his disregard for process and the shameless disingenuousness, obfuscation and evasion in his communications with the campus community have greatly damaged my view of him and his performance. It cannot be a proud legacy for a president to leave a university in such a state of division and low morale.
- I feel so completely betrayed. For many years, I was fooled into thinking that the mission of the university had some respect. I am now wholly disillusioned: only UK Healthcare matters, presumably for the money. The "academic" side of the university has been abandoned, its resources cut, and now even our voices are silenced. The new ARs include language prohibiting "indoctrination" that has no place in a university document. Shame, shame. Removing from faculty the power to make decisions about their work is worse than insulting or patronizing. It is authoritarian and perverse. I have no confidence that good decisions will be made in the future.

- The president has been doing an okay job of being president. However, I fear that he has lost perspective of what is important at UK as an educational institution. He keeps spending millions upon millions on the medical center, which is important, but should not be at the expense of non-medical education - which it certainly is. His tactic of pitting the members of the UK community against each other is purely political in purpose; he does not care that it is tearing the community apart. For example, the vast majority of faculty are being branded the enemy of UK's progress, the enemy of progressive student education, the enemy of staff interests, and the enemy of the University itself (especially by painting us as nothing more than a nuisance to the Board of Trustees). This is disingenuous at best and very harmful to UK's educational mission at worst. His attitude towards the faculty has been adversarial for years, but this attitude has turned hostile.
- I have been deeply disappointed in Dr. Capilouto's handling of the governance changes. I began the process as someone who actually agreed with most of the proposed changes and had trust in Dr. Capilouto to handle the processes well. However, at every point along the way I found that Dr. Capilouto refused to share information with other groups (e.g., refusing to even give a list of which institutions we were compared to), held "listening sessions" (one of which I was a part of) that felt completely contrived and designed to get to the outcome he wanted, and honestly presented himself in a way that felt very condescending to faculty voices. Again, I started this process largely on his side and spent time early on defending him given my sense of his good will and integrity. Unfortunately, I lost my sense of him as both a person of good will and a person of integrity through this process. Dr. Capilouto needs to recognize how deeply he has damaged his relationship with faculty and take active steps -- and it will take a lot of them -- to restore trust. I honestly don't know if he is willing to do that based on my observations over this past semester, and that feeling deeply, deeply troubles and disappoints me towards someone whose leadership I once admired.
- The campus environment is increasing non-inclusive. Current University procedures leave non administrative constituents no avenue to be heard despite the seeming existence of multiple administrative regulations and oversight committees. The process for lodging grievances is circular and inconsequential. History informs us that a top down method of governance is neither sustainable nor beneficial. Disappointingly campus governance seems to be moving egregiously in the wrong direction.
- Clearly this past year hasn't gone well for President Capilouto. He's in the middle of a manufactured crisis of his own making and seems to have dug in knowing he'll get what he wants regardless of the collateral damage. I've lost trust in his decision-making ability, largely because he has relied on repeating disingenuous talking points like a politician rather than communicating directly and honestly. It's been frustrating to watch this process unfold.

III. Support for Research

Unfavorable responses: 12

Representative comments:

- The changes at the institutional level to "support" the grant submission and handling process have caused significant problems. This has the potential to impact research progress. I have already considered having another institution lead submission of a proposal due to the complexity of our grant submission process. This means I will have a smaller budget on the proposal and bring fewer research dollars back to the university. Overall, these changes have significantly impacted faculty morale and have left faculty feeling disheartened about our future at the university.
- I am deeply concerned about the terrible performance of OSPA. Project Gateway is making things worse than they were before and it is making it nearly impossible to do research at UK. The university is going in the wrong direction in many ways right now and it makes me consider leaving.
- Grants administration is slow to the point of being nonexistent. Multiple grants take multiple months to establish. Business functions (RFS, Purchasing) is bogged down in bureaucratic minutia that increases the time to do work, taking away time from actually accomplishing our mission. Lip service is provided to creating an inclusive environment, but no actual work on campus shows this to be anything other than good feeling words. The change in the Provost office to being predominantly an extension of the Business office of healthcare highlights how little the university seems to care about the academic and research missions outside of the med center. To put it bluntly, this is the first time in my entire time at UK where I no longer believe the university leadership actually cares about the mission of the university (Creation and dissemination of knowledge)