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President Otis Singletary

he was poorly educated to do so. This is no longer true. Kentuckians now must be prepared to perform highly technical services to compete with people from other states. . . Education has become basic to the creation of job opportunities.”

True in the 1960s, those thoughts are even more relevant today. It is a fact that high technology and businesses are locating where they can find the best combination of natural resources, skilled labor, a favorable economic and political policy, and educational facilities to draw upon for training, research and the cultural enhancement of their employees.

As Kentucky learned during the recent competition for the location of the General Motors Saturn auto plant, the Commonwealth's entire system of education needs a new, vigorous commitment of money, public participation and support to make every Kentuckian a winner.

In explaining Kentucky's loss as the site location for the Saturn plant, state commerce commissioner Carroll Knicely told KETV that, “The only single factor in which Tennessee had an advantage over Kentucky was the fact that Tennessee has already made over a billion dollar commitment, over a shorter period of time, for education and has started implementing that.”

The current Council on Higher Education (CHE) draft strategic plan for higher education calls for the development of at least one comprehensive institution nationally recognized for the quality of its scholarship, research and graduates.

The University of Kentucky is already charged with that mission by the CHE. A perusal of alumni publications of the past several years, or just a close look at this one issue of the alumni magazine, provides ample evidence that the foundation upon which to build such a renowned university here is solid.

But, as UK President Otis Singletary points out, “Rhetoric alone will not make UK a premier university. If the political leadership of the state really believes that Kentucky should have a major teaching-research university, then increased funding is necessary to support that goal.”

The academic program available at UK is indeed comprehensive and has been promulgated to meet statewide needs. Early in its history the state and UK chose to establish a public university according to the best traditions of American higher education with both a liberal arts curricula and a number of professional and applied programs that have rather specific vocational goals. The result today is a 43,000-student

university with its community colleges, Lexington and medical center campuses.

About 98 percent of UK's faculty has a Ph.D. or the highest degree attainable in their field. Outstanding teaching is recognized each year by the UK National Alumni Association in which 103 professors have been honored in the past 24 years. Just last month the whole faculty of the department of sociology was singled out by the American Sociological Association for recognition of its teaching excellence. What makes the award so unique is that it is the first time an entire faculty has been so honored. And, the sociology program faculty itself is an interdisciplinary team representing teaching assignments in at least seven other colleges or departments at UK.

Last year's UK freshman class had the highest average composite score on the ACT entrance exam of any class entering a public university in Kentucky. Furthermore, that class score was a full three points above average for all freshmen enrolling in college throughout the country. Though the figures are preliminary, this year's UK freshman class is even better when evaluated on the basis of the ACT mean score.

UK is the only institution in Kentucky listed among the federal government's top 100 recipients of research funds. Dr. Syad Nasser in the College of Engineering is one example and one of only a few professors in the country whose research has been funded continuously for 20 years. More recently, UK faculty were also granted patents in new concepts for administering drugs which received national media attention.

Services provided to the citizens of Kentucky by the various colleges are numerous. While some benefits can be measured directly by dollars and other statistics, other programs contribute generally to a better quality of life. Services range from the operation of the Center Information Hotline (1-800-4Cancer) to the Small Business Development Center; to clinics operated by the Colleges of Dentistry and Medicine, to the state's Agricultural Cooperative Extension Service.

Alumni of the university have also made their mark as leaders in business, science and industry, pioneers in space, ambassadors and exemplary human beings.

President Singletary urges all alumni to be better informed and to send the message. Join the others who have already spoken out. Write your legislators, talk to your local community leaders, generate support for higher education in the Commonwealth and for The University of Kentucky.