

## Generating Knowledge and Service For All

As dean, I spend a lot of time thinking about what it means to be the College of Agriculture, Food and Environment in a land-grant university. Sometimes I explain it to neighbors and the business community in Kentucky. Sometimes I remind elected officials we are the folks who do the unbiased research and assessments, and we are the folks who provide every Kentucky county with up-to-date information for making vital decisions. Being a land-grant college means we are all about service, and we can back that up!

In the midst of the Civil War, Senator Justin Smith Morrill had a vision for a people's university that could provide a general education but be rooted in agricultural and mechanical arts. Supported by President Abraham Lincoln and the U.S. Congress, it was a revolutionary system designed to provide access to those who couldn't afford education. The doors they opened, however, admitted mainly white men. In 1890, a land-grant act for African-Americans, again predominantly male, expanded the educational offerings. Today, with the system well into its second century, we are expanding our educational offerings and our commitment to an ever more diverse population of students, faculty, staff, and Kentuckians all around the state.

Our connections to the Cooperative Extension Service and the U.S. Department of Agriculture makes us part of a long-standing, national system while also doing work that specifically benefits the commonwealth. Out of this long-term tradition of education, research, and outreach has grown our passionate culture of service. In this issue, we tell the stories of some of our great teachers, extension agents, and students. The legendary Lori Garkovich and the newer faculty member Lou Hirsch dedicate their service and enthusiasm to students at UK and beyond. From our Letcher and Harlan county agents comes a new income stream and the potential for a stronger local



economy. Professors Uneeda Bryant and Lisa Vaillancourt are committed to opening up opportunities to a diverse student population. And bioenvironmental engineer Bill Ford continues our commitment to improving our water systems.

We blend our three missions into a very effective generator of new knowledge that can be tested for value in the real world and directly transferred to our students and stakeholders. Together, the whole is way more than the sum of the three parts.

The College of Agriculture, Food and Environment walks the land-grant talk every day, and we have many more stories besides those featured in this issue. We stand on the shoulders of those who came before us. It is in our DNA to keep serving and discovering new ways to improve our world.

—Nancy Cox  
Dean, College of Agriculture, Food  
and Environment

# *It starts with us*