2025-2026

ANNUAL REPORT



Lewis Honors College

Overview

Through gains in admissions, student success, undergraduate research, career preparation and leadership development, the Lewis Honors College is advancing an Honors experience that develops talented students, strengthens their connection to Kentucky and prepares them to lead with integrity.

Enrollment and student success reached important milestones in 2025-2026. LHC saw record interest in Fall 2026 consideration, achieved its highest total enrollment in Fall 2025 and continued to serve a student body made up largely of Kentucky residents. Honors students also sustained strong retention and graduation outcomes, reinforcing the college's role in attracting talented students, supporting their progress and preparing them to contribute to the Commonwealth.

National recognition also reflected the strength of the Honors community. Two Honors students and one alum were named Fulbright Scholars. The college also celebrated one Barry M. Goldwater Scholar and one Udall Scholar.

May 2026 marked a milestone as the college celebrated its largest graduating class to date. Faculty and staff were also recognized for outstanding contributions to student learning and success through the Founding Dean's Award for Excellence in Honors Education and the Staff Excellence Award.

Graduates reported strong post-graduation outcomes. Among 2025 Honors graduates who responded to the First Destination Survey, 93.4% were employed or continuing their education within six months, and more than 61% of full-time employed respondents remained in Kentucky. Survey results also point to strong preparation through coursework, transferable skills, experiential learning, faculty mentoring and career networking.

Together, these developments position the college to build on a year of momentum and continue preparing students to lead lives of meaning and purpose. Additional efforts to understand national trends and attention to enrollment efforts will be important given changes in the national landscape. This report highlights the continued progress and importance of the Lewis Honors College to Kentucky and beyond.

Vision

The Lewis Honors College will provide a world-class Honors experience that is known for the success of its students, the quality of its faculty and curriculum, the respect of its peers, and the economic and social progress of our communities.

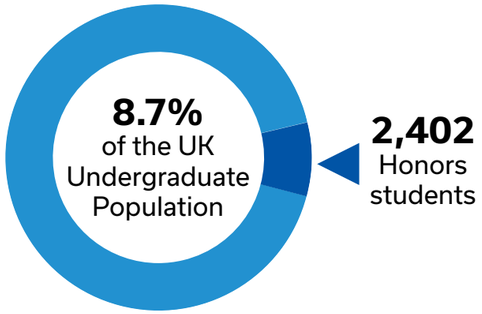
Mission

The mission of the Lewis Honors College is to better the Commonwealth of Kentucky and the world by helping students to explore their purpose, develop intellectually, and lead with integrity.

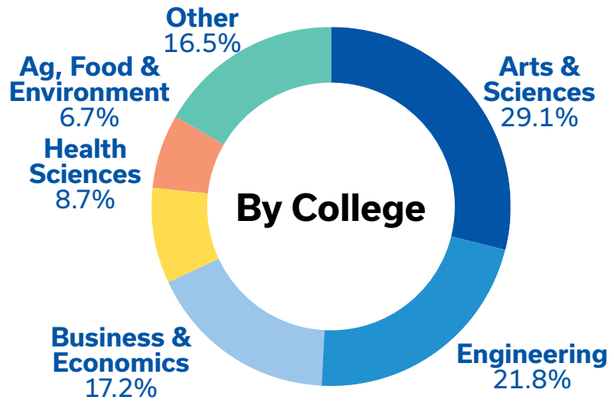


Class of 2029 Lewis Launch on the Gatton Student Center Social Staircase

Total Enrollment[1]

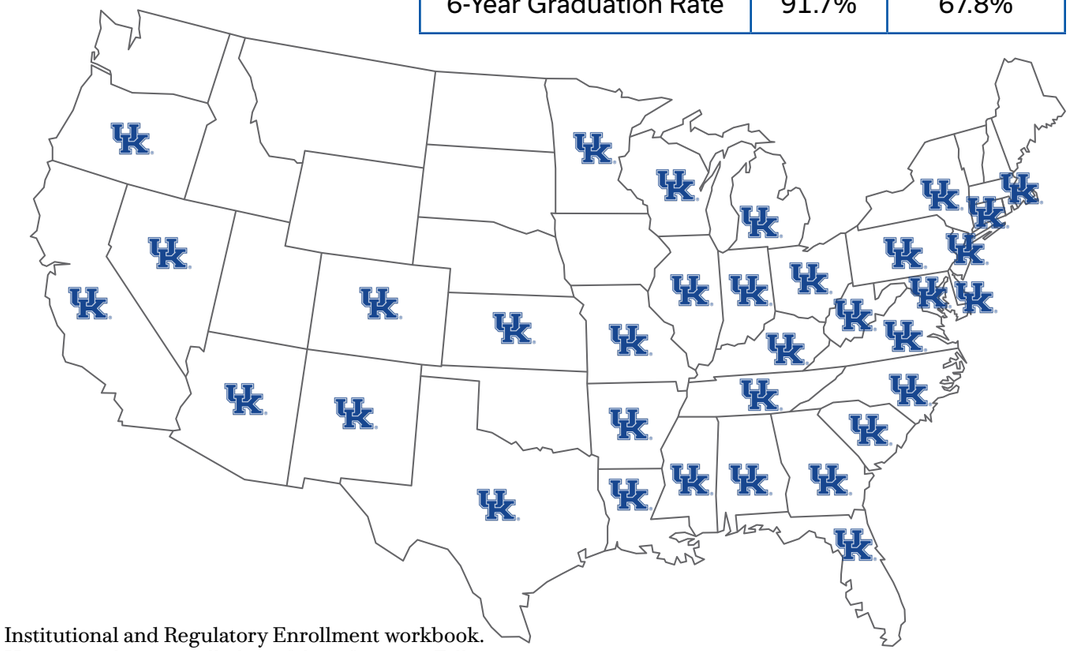


2,402 Honors students



80.4% KY resident
19.6% Out-of-state
1.8% International

	Honors[2]	Non-Honors
First-Year Retention Rate[3]	97.2%	85.3%
4-Year Graduation Rate	81.9%	56.3%
6-Year Graduation Rate	91.7%	67.8%



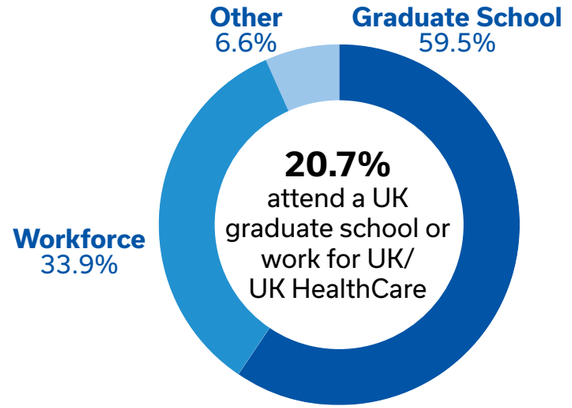
1 Institutional and Regulatory Enrollment workbook.
2 Honors students enrolled as of their first-year Fall semester.
3 Preliminary snapshot of first-year students who enrolled in Fall 2025 and re-enrolled in Fall 2026 as of June 11, 2026.

Admit Fast Facts[1]

Acceptance Rate	Average GPA	Average ACT
35.7%	3.94	30

Graduate Outcomes[2]

Compensation	Median Salary	Median Bonus
Full-time Employment	$62,700	$5,000



Graduate Schools Include

Auburn University • Carnegie Mellon University • Cornell University • Duke University • Emory University • Indiana University • Northwestern University • The Ohio State University • University of Cambridge • University of Georgia • UK • University of Illinois •University of Maryland • University of Michigan • UNC • University of Virginia • University of Wisconsin • Vanderbilt University • William & Mary

Employers Include

Alltech • Baker Tilly • Blue & Co., LLC • BofA Securities, Inc. • Crowe LLP • Dow Chemical • Enterprise Rent-A-Car • Epic Systems • Fifth Third Bank • GE Appliances • Lockheed Martin • Marathon Petroleum Corporation • Mars Inc • Mercer • Oracle Corporation • Palmer Engineering • PepsiCo Frito-Lay • P&G • The Walt Disney Company • Suntory Global Spirits • UK • UK HealthCare • US Congress

1 Recruiter Dashboard as of February 22, 2026 for Fall 2026 admitted students.
2 Respondents of First-Destination Survey for 2025 graduates.

Stimulate Academic & Creative Innovation

Faculty Features



Director of Undergraduate Studies and Senior Lewis Lecturer **Ryan Voogt**, Ph.D., received a 2026 Provost's Outstanding Teaching Award.



Voogt led the transformation of the required Honors foundational seminar, facilitated several education abroad programs in Hungary, Romania, and Croatia, and mentored numerous Honors students, including Gaines Fellows.



Senior Lewis Lecturer **Zada Komara**, Ph.D., received recognition at the national and state levels. She earned the Travis Stimeling Early Career Award for Excellence in Teaching Appalachian Studies and was appointed by Governor Andy Beshear to the Kentucky Oral History Commission.





Senior Lewis Lecturer **Kenton Sena**, Ph.D., received the UK Sustainability Champion award and two UK Sustainability Challenge Grants as a member of interdisciplinary teams. He also spoke at TEDxUKY and other conferences on surface mine reclamation and urban reforestation, published seven peer-reviewed papers, including several co-authored with Honors students, and taught classes that designed and installed the pollinator garden in the Lewis courtyard.



Students Earned Prestigious National Awards

An Honors education prepared students to compete successfully for nationally competitive awards, including the Fulbright U.S. Student Program, Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship, and NextGen Service Fellowship.

Owen Chesemore '26, **Gabrielle Drake** (alumna), and **Jesse Lee** '26 received the Fulbright English Teaching Assistant awards to the Czech Republic, Spain, and South Korea, respectively. Rising senior **Jose Villanos** was named one of 454 Goldwater Scholarship winners, and Lee also earned a NextGen Service Fellowship.



Owen Chesemore '26

The inspiration for Chesemore to teach in the Czech Republic originated from the Honors experience. "Through the classes with Dr. **Ryan Voogt**, I studied the historical developments that shaped Europe, including the Czech Republic. This understanding fueled my interest not only in teaching in this country but also in dedicating my time to studying its history and culture," Chesemore said.

For Lee, the Center for Personal Development provided guidance through career assessments, individual counseling, and leadership development in the Rising Leader program, but his service-learning courses had the greatest impact.

"Serving as an English tutor for Hispanic immigrants in 'Exploring Refugee and Immigrant Lives' by Dr. **Julie Boutwell-Peterson** and developing a project for CivicLex through Dr. **Kim Stoltzfus**' 'Project Management' class equipped me with the skills and experiences to bridge academic study with practice to serve my community," Lee said.

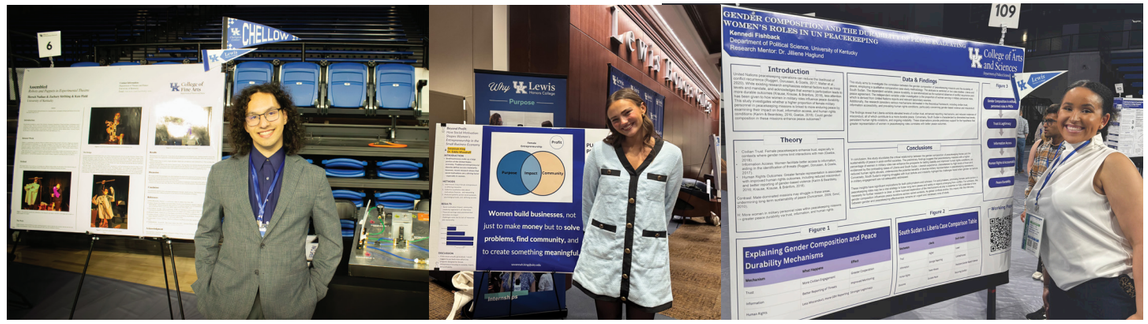


Jesse Lee '26

Through the NextGen Service Fellowship, Lee will complete an international development project with a non-governmental organization located in Bogotá, Colombia. He will then serve as a Fulbright to develop lesson plans to teach English and American culture plus lead an after-school program to support their educational journeys.

Thesis Research Presented at UK and Beyond

Students submitted a record number of Honors theses, with 74% presenting their work at either the December Honors Thesis Showcase or the April UK Undergraduate Research Showcase. Additional Honors students shared their research at conferences, including the Kentucky Honors Round Table (nine students) and the National Conference for Undergraduate Research (46 students).



Medal Ceremony Recognition



Peyton Ash received the Diachun Research Award for demonstrating outstanding research talent. “Research has been a passion of mine since high school, and winning this award felt like the ultimate accomplishment of my undergraduate career,” Ash said. “This award will help me achieve my goal of attending law school.”

Elizabeth Elliott was awarded the Diachun Scholar Award for her work in biology. Elliott’s nominator praised her prolific publications, her oral presentations and her effective teaching at UK STEM camps every summer. “As a future nurse, I must be able to communicate with patients through personal connections; Lewis Honors College gave me the skills necessary to forge such relationships,” Elliott said.





Siena Pilati accepted the Evans Scholar Award for her interdisciplinary scholarship as a student in public policy. “The Honors College has been pivotal during my time at UK, allowing me to participate in two Lewis faculty-led education abroad trips and broadening my horizons in classes covering topics from biology to spiritual memoirs,” Pilati said. She will begin a master’s program in public policy at Georgetown University.







Aidan Brummer earned the Raymond Betts Service Award. “Serving the Lewis Honors College has been one of the easiest and most rewarding experiences at UK. The LHC was incredibly supportive and created a great community for me to discover what is wildly possible,” Brummer said.





Jeffrey Brock was recognized with the Leadership Award. “Winning this prestigious award is a wonderful yet bittersweet conclusion to my time at the Honors College and the University of Kentucky overall,” Brock said. “My time at the Honors College has helped shape me into the leader I am today.”

Laura Carter, business officer, won the Staff Excellence Award. Her nominator wrote, “Laura is the quiet architecture of the Lewis Honors College. Her business sense and steady hand are the foundation beneath everything we build. Her work isn’t designed for the spotlight. It is something rarer: true, selfless service to this community.”





Julie Boutwell-Peterson, Ph.D., secured the Founding Dean’s Award for Faculty Excellence in Honors Education, given to a Lewis Honors College faculty member. Nominators praised “her ability to foster empathy and creativity in her classroom,” which in turn led to deeper understanding.

Kevin Sarge, Ph.D., captured the Founding Dean’s Award for Faculty Excellence in Honors Education, given to a UK faculty member. Sarge is a molecular and cellular biochemistry professor in the UK College of Medicine and teaches many Honors courses, including Appalachian Health. His nominator said he “never had a kinder, more inclusive professor” who “balances going into detail while also keeping class fun.”



Creativity Corner



Lewis Lecturer **Jena Seiler**, Ph.D., co-directed and filmed *The Keeping Space*, a 15-minute documentary highlighting the often-unseen work by UK custodian Shelia Lackey.

The film was selected for Single Channel’s fifth annual Video Festival and the 18th International Moving Film Festival in Mexico. For the international screening, Honors rising sophomore Angela Angulo-Rugerio translated the film into Spanish.



Check out the trailer!



Honors student **Alex Masterson**, received a Platinum Award, the highest honor presented by the 2025 Viddy Awards, for the long-form recruitment video *Experience Honors Education*. Only about 19% of entries earn Platinum recognition.

“Winning the Platinum Award was honestly surreal,” Masterson said. “It felt like everything we put into it really paid off.”

Watch the video!

Transform Global Leaders

Education Abroad



To prepare students to be global leaders, Honors faculty and staff led a variety of curated education abroad programs and encouraged participation in any University of Kentucky education abroad program. This year's dedicated Honors programs were held in Ecuador, England, Greece, Italy, and Scotland.

Some students also benefited from the generosity of the University of Kentucky's Women & Philanthropy Network, the Student Sustainability Council, the Kate Johnson Scholarship Fund, the James and Carolyn Halladay Fund for Education Abroad, and individual contributions from faculty, staff, alumni, and friends.

Laura Bryan, Ph.D., and **Sherelle Roberts**, Ph.D., secured a $40,000 grant from the Women & Philanthropy Network that reduced the cost for all 18 students participating in the "Leaders of a Global Society: Great Britain and Beyond: Supporting an Intensive Leadership Experience Abroad." The Student Sustainability Council supported students attending the trip led by **Pearl James**, Ph.D., "Tropical Ecology and Sustainability in Ecuador and Galapagos."

Kate Johnson Scholarship Recipient Highlights





Niki Chen and **Katie Creamer** are two of a dozen students who received support from the Kate Johnson Scholarship Fund. Both students used the grants to support their education abroad experiences.

Chen participated in the "UK Explore First: Careers, Cultures and Connections" to London where she visited healthcare companies and gained a better understanding of the many career paths within the healthcare industry. As a first-generation student, Chen said, "This trip gave me access to learning experiences that I may not have been able to encounter otherwise, and it helped me grow both personally and professionally."

Creamer traveled with Honors Faculty members **Julie Boutwell-Peterson**, Ph.D., and **Chelsea Brislin**, Ph.D., on "The Art of Noticing: Contemplative Travel Writing in Greece and Italy" program. Creamer said, "It has been one of the best experiences of my life. I have always loved traveling and exploring new countries but have never been to Europe. This trip has brought me some lifelong friendships that will continue to grow."

Student Spotlights



Trenton Schroering, a rising senior majoring in political science with minors in law and justice and writing, rhetoric, and digital studies, was one of 20 students selected from a highly competitive nationwide pool of nearly 800 applicants as a 2026 Key into Public Service Scholar by The Phi Beta Kappa Society. Schroering is the first UK student to earn the award.

"I view the honor as proof that public service is still valued," Schroering said. "I've never wanted anything more than to make the world a better place for my peers. I judge myself based on how many days I'm able to improve and how many smiles I'm able to bring to others, and hope that this award increases my capacity to do that. In the meantime, I'm glad I can represent my University of Kentucky community as the first Wildcat to ever achieve this honor."



AJ Hopkins, a rising senior natural resources and environmental science major, was one of 65 recipients from 49 colleges and universities to receive a Udall Undergraduate Scholarship. Hopkins is the first UK student since 2013 to be awarded a Udall Scholarship.

"This program has a long history of connecting environmental scholars and policy advocates from across the nation," Hopkins said. "Those connections through the Udall alumni network provide me immense opportunities to engage with and learn from the leaders who came before me."

Singletary Scholars Host Leadership Conference and Practice Servant Leadership



The Singletary Scholars Class of 2029 hosted the third annual Honors Leadership Conference, an event designed to explore how leadership takes shape across disciplines and experiences. The conference brought together community leaders, including keynote speaker Ryan Quarles, Ed.D., J.D., president of the Kentucky Community and Technical College System; plus faculty and students for a day of discussion, reflection, and learning about what it truly means to lead.

First- and second-year Singletary Scholars also wrote notes of appreciation and encouragement plus assembled gift bags for residents of Thomson-Hood Veterans Center and patients at Golisano Children's at UK.

Grant Harper said acts of service to military veterans is deeply gratifying and personal to him. "As someone who has multiple family members who have served or are serving, I understand the importance of thanking our veterans and troops," Harper said. "While my actions seem so simple, I believe small things go a long way, especially in honoring those who fight for our freedoms we enjoy every day."



Having known people who were hospitalized at a young age, **Oliver Martin** recognized how frightening the experience can be. "If I can do something as simple as making a quick goody bag, and a child's day will be better, count me in every time," Martin said.

Define Purpose

Compelling Community Conversations

Director of College Life **Libby Hannon** launched the "Ideas that Matter" series, which engaged students with forward-thinking scholars, changemakers, and entrepreneurs from Lexington and beyond.

- "Free Speech on College Campuses" with Neal Hutchens, Ph.D., First Amendment and higher education scholar at UK, reviewed notable court cases affecting free speech.
- "The Future of Earth and AI" with Honors Faculty members **Sherelle Roberts**, Ph.D., and **Daniel Kirchner**, Ph.D., along with **Trey Conatser**, Ph.D., from the Center for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching (CELT), hosted a panel discussion on the future of AI and sustainability.
- "Nonprofit Innovation" with Operation Secret Santa and local nonprofit founder Katie Keys and Honors program alumna **Lucy Jett Waterbury** shared the process of developing a 501(c)(3).
- "The Cost of Primates in Captivity" with UK alumna Eileen Dallaire, executive director of the Primate Rescue Center, reviewed the ethics of private primate ownership.
- "Shadow Governors" with **Kwame Agyemang**, Ph.D., endowed UK Professor of Sports Leadership, discussed how athletes, media incentives, and money work together to shape decisions across college sports, from rules and schedules to conference realignment, often without a formal vote.
- "Comics and Social Commentary" with local artist and animator Bryce Oquaye explored how comic books and visual art uncover cultural truths and spotlight the values that shape who we are.

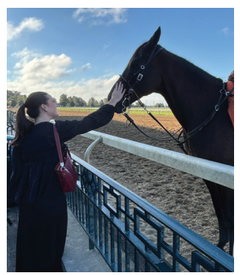






Center for Personal Development Launched New Program

The Center for Personal Development (CPD) introduced the first Industry Crosswalk and connected students with the Thoroughbred horse industry. This event offered an exclusive, behind-the-scenes look at the Kentucky equine industry and Keeneland's operations. Along with a tour of Keeneland and an overview of its history, students had the chance to hear from a panel of speakers and explore potential career opportunities within Keeneland.



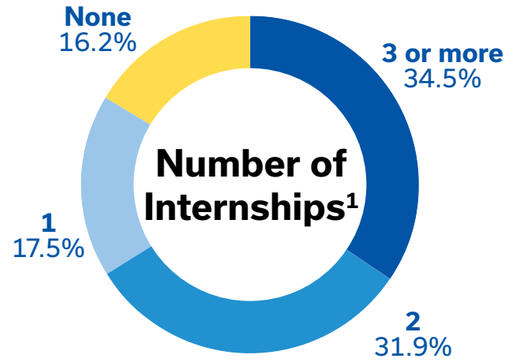


This program supplements other well-being, leadership development, and career readiness opportunities with individual counseling offered by CPD.

Internships Prepared Graduates

Most Honors graduates participated in at least one internship, co-op, practicum, clinical rotation, fellowship, and/or other experiential education opportunity throughout their UK career, with over one-third completing three or more.

These opportunities led to job offers, interviews, and networking connections.



New Scholarship Supported Summer Interns

Five students received stipends from the inaugural Rebecca Barnes Timmons Internship Fund designated for freshmen or sophomores "to gain experience and understanding of their chosen career path, and to further clarify their goals for the future."

- **Emma Green**, a marketing and management major interned with Nike in Beaverton, OR.
- **Serena Florell**, an integrated strategic communication major was a buyer for Burlington, Inc., in New York, NY, which gave her experience in the fashion industry.
- **Mallory Jones**, a public policy major worked with the Office of U.S. Senator Mitch McConnell in Washington, D.C.
- **Katie Beth London**, a finance and accounting major was an audit department intern with the Federal Reserve Bank in St. Louis, MO. "I've had the opportunity to connect with talented professionals across the Bank and learn more about the important role internal audit plays in supporting the Federal Reserve System," London said.
- **Prisha Patel**, an architecture major with a minor in business and a certificate in design-build, worked with Gensler in Chicago, IL. "My ultimate goal for this experience is to work towards bridging the gap between academia and the professional world," Patel said.

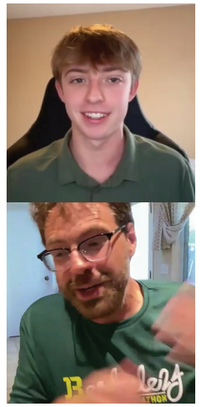




1 Respondents of First Destination Survey for 2025 graduates reflecting how many different internships, co-ops, practicums, clinical rotations, fellowships, and/or other experiential education opportunities held during their time at UK.

Build Resilience

Alumni Mentor Provided Access



Through the alumni mentoring program, **Ryan Beam** leveraged his alumni mentor's connections with data science professionals to launch his podcast, Data in Practice, focused on careers in data science (@DatainPractice on YouTube).

Beam's alumni mentor, **Jack Challis** '04, who lives in Burlingame, CA, met virtually and advised Beam to talk to people who do what he wants to do. During his six years as a mentor, Challis encouraged mentees to think beyond the next academic rung and instead shift their mindset to think intentionally about what comes next after they step off the ladder.

Students Recognized for Impact



Named after civil rights pioneer and the first African American student to attend the University of Kentucky in 1949, the Lyman T. Johnson Awards are given to members of the UK community who have positively impacted the lives of people on campus, the city, state, or nation.

Four Honors students received recognition as Torch Bearers from several colleges. They are from left to right, **Kennedi Fishback** (Lewis Honors College), **LaNasia Mason** (College of Communication and Information), **Zaynah Shahid** (Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment), and **Aniyah Maxey** (College of Social Work).

Leaders Helped Peers Discover Their Future

One of the responsibilities of student leaders, such as Honors Residential Experience (HRE) Peer Mentors and Lewis Liaisons, is to hold events to bring together peers within the HRE and across all the colleges. In addition to offering social events such as "Cookies and Cocoa" or "Trivia Night," student leaders organized personal and professional development opportunities such as a vision board-making activity and a panel discussion of medical students, which included Honors alumni.







Enhance Well-being

Honor the Balance



Recognizing that student success depends on well-being, the Lewis Honors College integrated wellness throughout the Honors experience. Attendance increased after the popular "Donuts with the Dean" event expanded to include fresh fruit and renamed "Donuts and Fruit with the Dean." Students also benefited from the soothing "Sound Bath and Tea" event, which included a take-home "Honor the Balance" souvenir mug. "Honor the Balance" eye masks distributed during the annual chair massages during finals reminded students to take breaks. Professors hosted cooking classes to help students learn to prepare and identify healthy eating options. Plus, faculty, staff, and students partnered to remove non-native species and plant a pollinator garden in the Lewis courtyard for the UK community to enjoy.







See how the LHC honors the balance!

Lewis Loves You Week



College Life and CPD developed a collaborative event series in February called "Lewis Loves You Week" as a part of the Honor the Balance vision, including a square-dancing workshop, a button-making social event, and a book sale co-hosted by the Friends of the Lexington Public Library.

During the "Brew & Browse Book Fair," visitors enjoyed the smooth sounds of jazz saxophonist and Honors junior **Vincent Buchenberger**, a psychology major and music performance minor, who is a member of the jazz-fusion band Tiramisu, which includes three other UK students.









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