

# A critical UK trustee is leaving. How does she feel about the university on her way out?

BY JESSE FRAGA  
jfraga@herald-leader.com

A staunch advocate for the University of Kentucky's faculty members left the institution with major questions on her last day as a top UK policy-maker Tuesday.

Hollie Swanson, a professor and member of the UK Board of Trustees, has been one of the few members to question and publicly push back against many decisions before a vote since she was picked for the board in 2020 and again in 2023. Her term expired Tuesday.

Swanson gave a seven-minute speech Tuesday criticizing the "top-down" decisions that she believes marginalize university members and undermine UK's purpose, part of which is to disseminate and apply knowledge, according to its strategic plan.

"I have seen the top-down style of our university impacted before itself," Swanson said. "What I have been seeing, especially this past year, is attempts to marginalize and isolate the trustees that represent the campus community, the faculty, staff and students. As a member of the faculty who has witnessed the erosion of shared governance and silencing of the faculty, I find all of these actions very concerning."

UK President Eli Capilouto, Provost Robert



Hollie Swanson, faculty trustee on the University of Kentucky Board of Trustees, discusses how deans should be appointed during her last board meeting on Tuesday, June 30, 2026, at Kroger Field in Lexington, Ky.

DiPaola, other administrators, faculty, staff and community members attended the board meeting. Everyone except the board and administration gave Swanson a standing ovation.

She said the board and administration's decline in consideration of faculty and staff makes it difficult for the university to achieve its mission.

"A further marginalization of the faculty and staff committed to our mission promises to increase the tension between management and labor and accelerate adversarial relationships," she said. "I ask you ... to ensure that these threats do not impede our influence of the vocal ambition of improving people's lives."

She also condemned

the university's growing number of private companies and partnerships. UK is moving athletics under Champions Blue; and dining and facilities under Compass Group. Swanson said privatizing sectors of the university gives the board of trustees less authority over their operations.

"As the corporate structure gains more branches, fulfilling the fiduciary responsibility of the board becomes more challenging," she said. "In addition, the corporate model focuses on efficiency and revenue, whereas the nonprofit focuses on its mission of service. In our corporate model, we have seen top-down decision making replace true shared governance."

She urged the board to

"embrace dissent" and ensure trustees are "treated equally" regardless of how they are appointed or who they represent. Most trustees are appointed by the governor, and a few were elected by faculty, alumni and students.

The university's governing regulations delegate most policy decisions to the board of trustees. But the board's ability to achieve UK's mission as well as assert authority over the administration has diminished, according to Swanson.

"We are facing significant threats to our fundamental mission and our ability to undertake the right action," she said, referring to the private corporations as threats.

She told the Herald-Leader she hopes at least

one trustee in the future will serve on the boards of each private company owned by or in partnership with UK, to be able to report back to the board with first-hand updates about the companies. Trustees have heard updates on Champions Blue and Compass Group through UK administrators and company executives.

Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear previously called out UK's administration, including Capilouto, for not properly representing faculty since the university senate dissolved.

"You should be able to work with the faculty that's there," Beshear said of UK on April 28. "These are the folks that are providing that education, and that's your job. You're an institution of higher education."

He is expected to appoint new trustees to fill two open board of trustees seats in the coming weeks.

Swanson has earned a reputation for her critical eye on university decisions, according to Karen Petrone, the other faculty trustee who still serves on the board because her term expires July 1, 2028.

"I greatly admire her keen scientific mind, asking probing questions across all aspects of board business, and most of all, I admire Hollie's supreme integrity and fierce courage in standing up sometimes alone for the interests of faculty, staff and students," Petrone told the board.

She described Swanson as a friend and mentor.

Swanson and other trustees whose terms expired were presented with resolutions on behalf of the board. Petrone recognized Swanson for her academic contributions to UK since she began teaching there in

1995.

"The University of Kentucky Board of Trustees does hereby adopt this resolution on June 30, 2026, and expresses its sincere appreciation to Hollie Swanson for her distinguished leadership, her dedication to advancing education and scientific research, and her lasting contributions to the University of Kentucky and the Commonwealth," Petrone said, reciting the resolution.

## FACULTY HAVE 'AVENUES FOR COMMUNICATION,' PROVOST SAYS

The board and administrators did not publicly respond to Swanson's speech, but DiPaola told the Herald-Leader minutes later that he wants faculty to feel supported.

"We will always be focused on taking care of our people," DiPaola said. "We'll continue to find avenues to make sure that we're communicating and getting input to do that."

He said there are opportunities such as faculty senate and board of trustees meetings for faculty to share their opinions with him and other administrators. The faculty senate replaced the university senate and can only give advice to administrators, rather than decide policies.

"We'll do everything possible to show that faculty are able to be communicated with in terms of anything that's changing and get input through those avenues that have been set up, and we are committed to doing that," he said.

DiPaola added that UK will "ensure that no matter how the system is, or grows, or changes, faculty can continue to be successful and do what they're passionate about."

# Beshear expects federal request for Kentucky flood relief to be a 'slam dunk'

BY CHRISTOPHER LEACH  
cleach@herald-leader.com

Gov. Andy Beshear toured flood damage in two Kentucky communities Wednesday, and said he believes the request for financial relief from the federal government to victims to be a "slam dunk."

Beshear made stops in Cumberland County and Madison County to get a better understanding of how much damage there was from the recent devastating flood before submitting a request for financial aid to the Federal Emergency Management Agency. He said Madison County was hit the hardest, and more people could have died if it weren't for the efforts of first responders.

Madison County received 4 to 6 inches of rain from the torrential rain showers, resulting in flooding and three deaths in the county. Two people died in a flooded basement apartment on University Drive and another was swept away in a vehicle on Tates Creek Road.

If FEMA complies with Beshear's request for help, it will be the 16th federally-approved natural disaster in his time as Kentucky's governor. He said it should be a "slam dunk" to get public assistance approved and expects individual assistance to get approved as well.

"We know that will never make up for the fact that they've lost so much, but if it can help them get back on their feet, we got to push as hard as we can to do it," Beshear said.

FEMA's Public Assistance Program provides

grants to governments for recovery efforts from major disasters or emergencies. Certain types of private nonprofit organizations are also eligible for public assistance.

The agency's Individual Assistance and Households Program provides finances and services for eligible individuals and households affected by a disaster. Financial assistance can include funds for temporary housing, home repair or replacement, and other uninsured or underinsured expenses.

Team Kentucky officials have created an unmet needs survey and damage reporting tool for residents impacted by the flood. Beshear previously said data collected by the survey will give them access to helpful resources, and help the state its official request to FEMA.

"I'm hopeful that they will be on the other line and willing to listen," Beshear said. "Our people have been impacted pretty hard. This ought to be an easy decision for them."

While the request for federal assistance is ongoing, Beshear encouraged victims to work with their local emergency managers to get immediate help. He said other more counties, such as Bullitt and Spencer counties, will be included in the request to FEMA, and impacted communities will receive the same level of care as the other communities hit by prior natural disasters.

"We will try to include everybody that we can, because it would be awful to have a couple of families that really need help that can't get it," Beshear said. "We often included just as much as humanly

possible."

The governor declared a state of emergency for Kentucky as a result of the flood. Madison County along with 25 other cities and counties have also declared a local state of emergency, according to Beshear.

Beshear previously said a fourth victim died in Jackson County, but Coroner Conley Tyra said the victim died in a crash which was not caused by the weather. Beshear's office responded by saying the Department of Public Health determined floodwaters contributed to the crash and ruled the death was flood related.

Additional fatalities are being investigated as possible flood-related deaths, according to Beshear.

Beshear credited the quick efforts of local first responders, which he said saved many lives.

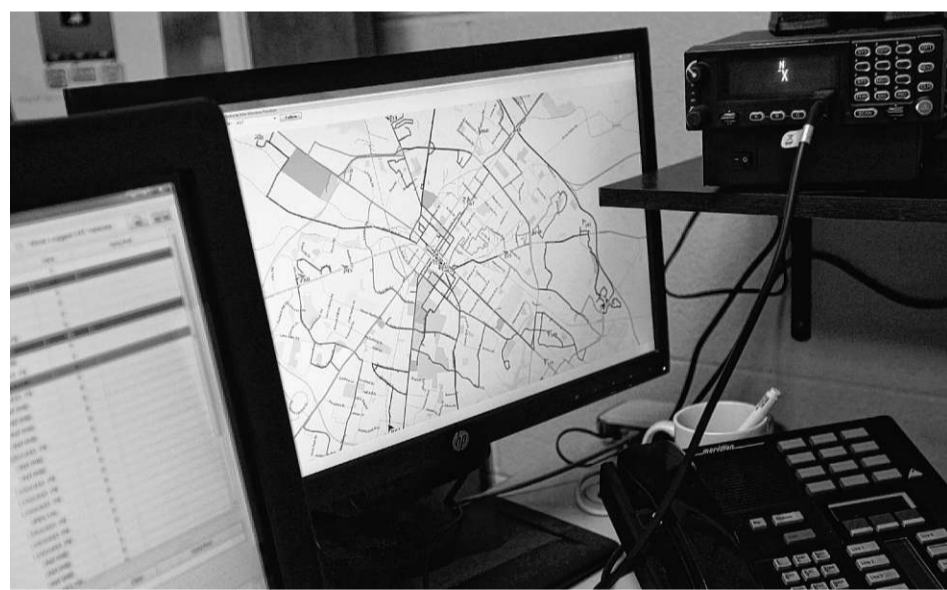
"I'll put them up against everybody and anybody," Beshear said. "I certainly got their back and I'm proud of them, and I know the commonwealth is too."

## MADISON COUNTY VICTIM WAS A VETERAN, 'DEDICATED ELECTION OFFICER'

The man that died on Tates Creek Road, Garnett Isbell, served in the U.S. Army, according to the Madison County Clerk's Office. His obituary said he was a Master Sergeant with the Defense Communication Agency and was stationed in Germany, Korea and Saudi Arabia during his military career.

After an honorable discharge from the military, Isbell worked as a 911 dispatcher in Lexington, a mailman in Lancaster and a poll worker in Madison County, according to his obituary.

"As a dedicated election officer, he was a steady and respected presence in the election process and a valued member of our election community," the clerk's office said.



Lexington Herald-Leader

A new automatic vehicle locator/global positioning system allows Lextran's dispatch center to monitor routes and bus locations via computer.

# Lexington leaning into tech job growth, will help fund dozens of internships

BY ADRIAN PAUL BRYANT  
abryant@herald-leader.com

Lexington officials want to grow the city's technology industry, and is spending money on future workers to do it.

The city announced a new tech internship program on Tuesday morning that will place full-time college students within two years of graduation in positions at local companies.

"When I owned an IT

company, internships were essential," 10th District Council member Dave Seigny said. "They helped us cultivate talent, strengthen our culture, and identify future leaders. Some of those interns are now leading the company twenty years later."

Lexington-Fayette Urban County Council allocated \$90,000 to help partially reimburse wages for companies that host interns through the program. Officials estimate the funding

will support 30 to 40 positions.

Interns can do true technology work, like software design, or can be in roles where they use technology to optimize work for employers who do not directly work in the tech sector. Companies can have up to two interns, and each position must include 120 hours worth of working time.

Companies interested in hosting interns through the program can apply with the city starting on July 6.

# Large barn destroyed by fire at farm on Paris Pike near Bourbon County line

BY KARLA WARD  
kward1@herald-leader.com

A large barn was destroyed by fire in rural Fayette County Tuesday afternoon.

The Lexington Fire Department was dispatched to the fire at 5075

Paris Pike at 3:16 p.m.

Windy conditions exacerbated the situation, according to a fire department spokesperson, who said crews were "operating in a defensive mode."

"Extra units were dispatched to help with water supply. Firefighters are

focused on protecting nearby exposures," the department said.

The barn was deemed a total loss.

No horses were inside the barn, and no equipment was damaged, according to the fire department. Hay was being stored inside.