

‘Set all students up for success’: UK student serves as Agriculture Future of America ambassador

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LEXINGTON, Ky.—
Pre-veterinary experience. Leadership opportunities through Agriculture Future of America (AFA). A formerly feral cat named Wema. Alana Henegar has gained these things and more as a University of Kentucky student.
From Delaplane, Virginia, Henegar is studying Animal Sciences in the UK Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment and expects to graduate in 2027. She hopes to attend veterinary school and have a career in large animal veterinary care.
This year, she is serving as an ambassador for AFA, an organization that connects young leaders with professional development experiences. As a freshman, Henegar learned about AFA from UK’s student ambassador at the time and decided



to join.
Unlike many clubs or chapters at college campuses, AFA doesn’t have regular meetings but is represented by ambassadors and invites students to national conferences. Gatherings such as the Precision Agriculture Institute and Food Systems

Institute offer skill development and networking opportunities.
Henegar attended the AFA Leaders Conference in November 2025, which included networking and skill-building.
“It strengthens your public speaking, networking, and leadership abilities

as a whole,” Henegar said. “There are opportunities to get your foot in the door at companies for post-grad or internships.”
Henegar said she learned about potential jobs she had never considered, like being a veterinarian for the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

“AFA not only helps you figure out other opportunities, but it helps you better yourself to be able to work toward those opportunities,” Henegar said.
This summer, Henegar attended the Animal Institute in Kansas City, where she heard from professionals and visited production factories for companies such as Hill’s Pet Food. She also visited the Kansas State Capitol to learn about advocacy and legislation that impacts the industry.
“This conference helps to show students the different ways they can be involved and help the industry that feeds the world,” Henegar said.
Organizations at UK have further enhanced Henegar’s educational

Laboratory (VDL).
She has also shadowed and worked at vet clinics to complement her classroom learning and prepare for veterinary school. Henegar has brought more than just knowledge home. Last year, a clinic she worked at received a feral cat and her kittens. The kittens were adopted, but no one had claimed the mom, so Henegar adopted Wema.
Henegar said she can’t recommend AFA enough to her fellow UK students.
“I want to make sure that other people know enough about it to know that it will be fun, and that it’ll be a great experience for them,” she said.
Learn more about Animal Sciences and pre-veterinary medicine mentoring at UK. Learn more about Agriculture Future of America. Applications for the next AFA Leaders Conference are due Sept. 10, 2026.

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Alana Henegar visited the Kentucky State Capitol during the AFA Animal Institute in Kansas City.
(Photo provided by Alana Henegar)

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