UK Bookstore celebrates grand opening after total face-lift

The University of Kentucky and Follett recently completed a total face-lift of the UK Bookstore, which now features more than 23,000 square feet, enhancing the shopping experience with wider aisles, a greater selection of merchandise and an accessible, inviting new entrance on Euclid Avenue. The joint project between the university and the Follett Higher Education Group cost more than $3 million.

“We are now a ‘one-stop shop’ for students who live on campus,” said Sally Wiatrowski, bookstore director. “This store will be a campus destination for textbooks, trade books, and Wildcat imprinted clothing, which includes a Nike© shop for men and special sections for women’s and children’s apparel.”

“The strong partnership forged between the Follett management team and the University of Kentucky has complemented quite well the delivery of services to our students and the university community,” said John Herbst, director of the UK Student Center. “This renovation and expansion will create an exciting opportunity to bring the UK Bookstore to a premiere level of service, with an aesthetically pleasing atmosphere that encourages our community be fully engaged in the task of becoming a Top 20 institution. The new bookstore reflects our values as a scholarly community.”
The Student Center: it’s not just a place . . .

The UK Student Center enjoyed another watershed semester of bustling activity, reinforcing its position as the major artery of student life on campus. This past year (2007-2008), the Student Center took over 8,200 reservations for events and enjoyed over 1.3 million people visiting for a break, an event, or to grab a bite to eat. That’s over 50,000 people a week!

In the 2008 Fall semester alone, the Cats Den sponsored over 100 events which played host to an incredible 76,000 patrons.

Renovations ranging from minor cosmetic enhancements to major construction were made to the Student Center over this semester. The Martin Luther King, Jr. Cultural Center was the recipient of new furniture and carpet, and everywhere students went throughout the building they were reminded to “See Blue” courtesy of the new graphic detailing adorning the stairs, elevators and building walls.

The UK Bookstore also began its major renovation, with a new exterior storefront on Euclid Avenue and a lush, contemporary interior overhaul to provide a relaxed atmosphere to better enhance the student shopping experience.

The Worsham Theater also underwent its first major augmentation in well over two decades; with a state of the art screen, enhanced lighting and sound, upgraded wireless connectivity and life/safety additions, comfortable new seating and cosmetic renovations such as new carpeting and drapes.

The Food Court and UK Dining Services enjoyed one of their most successful semesters to date, with the opening of a new Sbarro© continuing to be an unqualified success and Subway© retaining a very healthy popularity. Dining Services also continued to provide a wide plethora of quality food events. The October “Food Fridays on the Patio” series, held as a cooperative effort between Dining Services and the Student Center Director’s Office, continues to solidify itself as a popular tradition after several years. Dining Services has also continued to expand its popular series showcasing international cuisine from around the world in the Café du Chat.

The Cats Den continued to be a central spot in the cultural consciousness of campus this semester, hosting and programming over 100 events ranging in scope from poetry slams, concerts, stand up comedy, sneak previews of movies, and much, much more. The Cats Den weekend incentive
programs led to event collaborations with over 40 extraordinarily diverse student organizations in 2008, making weekends at the Student Center busier than in recent memory. And with reservations filling up fast for 2009, there are no signs of slowing down any time soon!

The Late Night Film Series enjoyed a surge in popularity, with a record number of people coming to see classic flicks, recent hits and compelling documentaries every Thursday and Friday night (free of charge). The group also looks to continue their streak of successful collaborations with other student organizations into 2009 with the International Film Series. A collaboration between the Network of Global Scholars and the Late Night Film Series, the International Film Series brings award winning, critically acclaimed documentaries from around the world once a month to the Cats Den — free to students, staff and faculty.

The student and staff programmers are continuously looking for new ideas and ways to partner with faculty, classes or independent project teams for events of interest to our students. There is always an open invitation to propose ideas for new programs in the Cats Den.

The University decided to honor one of its own in renaming the Student Center Ballroom the Frank H. Harris Grand Ballroom. Mr. Harris was former Director of the Student Center for over 24 years. A renaming/ribbon cutting ceremony will take place in late spring.

Despite the climate of economic uncertainty and tension, it has been an extremely exciting time to watch the positive progress and cultural movements taking place within the Student Center. Here’s hoping you’ll join us in 2009. Come by and enjoy, relax, or join in the excitement.... It’s not just a place!

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**Nominate a student for the VanMeter Service Award**

This year marks the eighteenth year that the University of Kentucky recognizes the outstanding volunteer service achievements of Darrell A. VanMeter, through the presentation of an undergraduate award named in his honor.

Darrell, (a sophomore at the time of his death in 1991), was recognized by the University community and his home community for his positive contributions and his dedication to serving others. The impact of his “Good Samaritan” approach to helping others was apparent to faculty, staff, and students alike. Darrell A. VanMeter touched the campus with his selfless heart and his continual displays of service. Service was not an isolated act for him. It was a way of living.

The junior or senior recipient of this award should be one who has displayed a passion for serving others in a meaningful way throughout their college career; one who is an advocate for change on our campus and in our community.

Please do consider nominating a worthy student to receive this award which will be presented at the Honors and Awards banquet on April 14, 2009. The deadline is Friday, March 13. Please contact Laura Hatfield at laura.hatfield@uky.edu if you have any questions.

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**It’s time: DanceBlue 2009!**

DanceBlue 2009 is just around the corner with students putting their 24-hour dancing shoes on from Friday, March 6 – Saturday, March 7 at Memorial Coliseum. These students have been raising money all year long in an effort to support the children and families cared for at the UK Pediatric Oncology Clinic. Last year alone, they raised over $424,000. If you’d like to give, please do so by visiting the web site at www.danceblue.org. This student-led organization is by all accounts successful not merely by the funds they raise, but by the heart behind their mission. This picture is last year’s Overall Chair, David Ritchie, and his fraternity’s adopted family child, Austin. Austin lost his battle to cancer this summer and passed away knowing that he was loved by hundreds of students on our campus. Our DanceBlue students dance for children like Austin. Please join us Dance Marathon Weekend to see hundreds of UK students DANCE BLUE!
The University of Kentucky’s Counseling & Testing Center and College of Medicine will offer a Depression Screening Day (Feb. 26) with open screenings at the William T. Young Library, as a way to reach out to campus and community members who may be experiencing symptoms of depression, anxiety, or other mood disorders.

Depression Screening can also be a way to identify anyone who is having thoughts of suicide. It is one facet of suicide prevention work on campus. Another facet is the Question-Persuade-Refer (QPR) program, which began in fall 2003 after the suicide of 21-year-old rising senior and ROTC cadet scholarship-winner Kevin Alan Graham.

Like many college students, Graham struggled with a few classes, which led him to change his pre-med career path and choice of major. The loss of his lifelong career aspirations contributed to a sense of hopelessness about his future.

Graham participated in UK’s Depression Screening Day in the fall of 2002, staffed by clinicians from the university Counseling & Testing Center and physicians from the UK College of Medicine. His score indicated significant symptoms of depression and Graham was referred to counseling. He called his parents to let them know that he finally knew why he’d been feeling so low.

Graham was seen by a mental health professional who prescribed anti-depressant medication for him. However, after changing his focus to a career in the military, he became concerned that his use of psychiatric medication would limit his ability to serve. He stopped taking his medication without physician supervision.

Not long after that, Graham ended his life on June 21, 2003. Less than a year after his death, Graham’s older brother was killed by a roadside bomb while on active military duty in Iraq.

In the face of these terrible losses, the Graham family made a decision to help other families avoid such tragedy. The family established an endowment to support the QPR effort at their sons’ Alma mater, the University of Kentucky. Mary Bolin-Reece, director of the Counseling & Testing Center, worked closely with the Graham family to bring the program to UK. Bolin-Reece has since become a national master trainer for QPR, now providing instructor certifications and consultations regarding college suicide prevention efforts. She has also served on the steering committee of the Kentucky Suicide Prevention Group to provide a higher education “voice” and to coordinate UK’s efforts with those occurring at regional and state levels.

Kevin Graham's story highlights several of the obstacles to prevention of suicide. First, Graham and his family were not aware of the range of symptoms of depression and how to get appropriate treatment until after the National Depression Screening Day event. Many people overlook symptoms of depression until those symptoms become severe and more difficult to treat.
Second, due to fear of stigma and potential loss of job opportunities, Graham was hesitant to continue treatment. Stigma about mental health issues continues today, with popular media promoting images of mentally ill people as dangerous and to be avoided. Such images discourage people from seeking the help they need to heal.

Finally, Graham's death points to our difficulty in discussing mental health issues, perhaps for the two reasons mentioned above. Even within families, mental illness is often not discussed.

Graham's mother found out (after his death) of a family history of depression, about which she said, "I'm so tired of secrets. Being depressed is not something to be ashamed of. It's about brain chemistry, not some personal weakness. If I had known more about the risk factors, maybe there's something we could have done to help Kevin."

Graham's father said, "I knew my son was sad, but what I didn't know was that you can die from being too sad."

In 2003, the University of Kentucky launched QPR gatekeeper training, as created by Paul G. Quinnett, a clinical psychologist in Spokane, WA. The focus of the program is to educate individuals about the symptoms of depression and signs of potential suicidal behavior. Participants are also trained to persuade people in crisis to seek help and to refer them to the appropriate services.

Approximately 850 people were trained across campus during the first year of the program. To date, more than 3,000 individuals have received QPR gatekeeper training from UK's certified instructors. As demand for the program grew, several new QPR trainers were certified in 2005 and then again in 2007, including a graduate student from the social work department, an assistant dean in the College of Medicine, and additional staff of the Counseling & Testing Center.

The Greek community at the University of Kentucky is committed to being an integral part of the Lexington community. On Sunday, November 9th, every fraternity and sorority participated in a project to clean the streets around the University of Kentucky-Lexington area. Tyler Montell, UK Student Government Association President, and Ben Duncan, UK Interfraternity Council Vice President of External Affairs, collaborated with Lisa Higgins-Hord, UK Vice President of Community Engagement, Officer Keith Gaines, UK Neighborhood Coordinator for the Lexington Division of Police, and local Neighborhood Associations to coordinate the effort. The fraternities and sororities targeted streets normally cluttered with debris due to tailgating. Collectively, there were 21 streets that were free of trash on Sunday! The effort was very well received from the Lexington community – many neighbors even stopped the students to discuss the effort and thank them for their time! The Greek community at UK hopes this event will turn into a semester-long project of each organization so members will feel a sense of belonging within the Lexington community during their time at UK and the Lexington residents will see another way in which Greek students are an asset to the community as well.
STAFF DEVELOPMENT:
Disability on campus

Our monthly Staff Development Program for January featured a presentation from Jake Karnes and a panel of students with disabilities who shared their experiences at the University. Over seventy-five Student Affairs Staffers came to this most informative presentation and panel discussion.

Left to right: Michael Neel, Hammad Khan and Jena Richards were members of the student panel that aided the discussion of disability and the UK campus.

DID YOU KNOW?

WRFL 88.1 FM student-run non-automated radio station continues to operate on a 24 hours-a-day/365 days-a-year schedule. This is a rarity among college stations nationwide.