

OCTOBER 2025 EDITION

# WILDCAT CANTER

**UK SIGNATURE  
INDUSTRIES  
CAREER FAIR**

[ PAGE 6 ]

**WEEKEND OF  
SERVICE IS NOV.  
1-2, 9**

[ PAGE 9 ]

**BRAVEHEARTS  
EQUINE CENTER  
GIFTS PASSENGER  
VAN**

[ PAGE 12 ]



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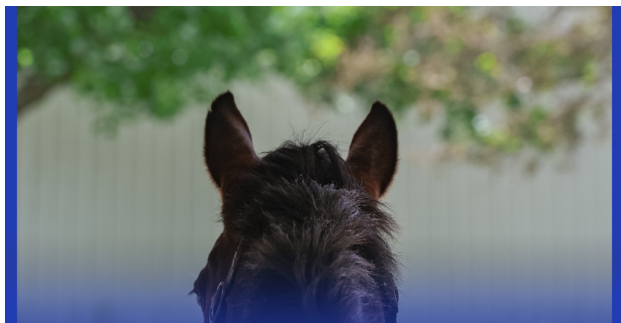
# HIGHLIGHTS



## UK SIGNATURE INDUSTRIES CAREER FAIR SUCCESSFULLY PRESENTS JOB SEEKERS WITH OPPORTUNITIES

On Sept. 25, more than 550 job seekers took advantage of face-to-face time with employers from Kentucky's signature industries of agribusiness, distillation and equine.

*CONTINUED ON PAGE 6*



## EQUINE WORKPLACE CONDITIONS STUDY UNDERWAY

We invite you to take part in a research study conducted by the University of Kentucky to gather your input on equine workplace conditions.

*CONTINUED ON PAGE 11*



## GENEROUS DONATION BY BRAVEHEARTS EQUINE CENTER HELPS ENABLE UK EQUINE STUDENT ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION

There are many experiential learning opportunities in and around Lexington, but not all college students are able to take advantage of them because they don't have access to a vehicle.

*CONTINUED ON PAGE 12*

## UPCOMING EVENTS & IMPORTANT DEADLINES

### NOVEMBER

**11/1-2, 9**

Weekend of Service

### DECEMBER

**12/2**

ESMA Experiential Learning Showcase

**12/18**

Graduation Open House

Full event listings and details can be found [here](#).



# WELCOME

CAITLIN DIBIASIE  
EQUINE PHILANTHROPY  
DIRECTOR



My name is Caitlin DiBiasie, and I have the distinct honor of serving as the equine philanthropy director for the Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment. Previously, I had the privilege of serving in the Federal Relations office at UK, where I gained valuable experience navigating federal policy, building strategic partnerships and advocating for the university's priorities.

At the heart of my work is a passion for connecting people with purpose. Philanthropy profoundly shapes the student experience – opening doors to scholarships and hands-on learning

opportunities supporting innovative research that continues to drive our equine industry forward. In the months ahead, I look forward to finding new ways to bring our community together, celebrating student achievements, expanding experiential learning and fostering meaningful relationships that empower both students and supporters to contribute to a shared legacy of success.

Together, we can continue to propel our equine programs forward by cultivating the next generation of equine professionals and ensuring the University of Kentucky remains a leader in equine science and education.

Having been born and raised in Kentucky, I've grown up around this industry and deeply appreciate its heritage and impact, not only to the state – but globally. Being a part of it in this capacity really feels like a generational dream – one that I take a lot of pride in. I'm eager to play a role in empowering our students to succeed and in fostering the continued growth and excellence of this signature industry.

Go Cats!



## Ag Equine Programs





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THE GRADUATE  
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GRADUATE GALLOP OR SUBSCRIBE HERE.



## UK SIGNATURE INDUSTRIES CAREER FAIR SUCCESSFULLY PRESENTS JOB SEEKERS WITH OPPORTUNITIES

by Holly Wiemers

photos by UK Ag Communications

Ambition successfully paired with opportunity recently during the annual University of Kentucky Signature Industries Career Fair. On Sept. 25, more than 550 job seekers took advantage of face-to-face time with employers from Kentucky's signature industries of agribusiness, distillation and equine.

Students representing 76 different majors across 12 different UK colleges and 12 other universities attended the event. Additionally, 31 alumni or non-student job seekers were on hand to meet with more than 250 representatives of the 77 employers present.

"It is increasingly our responsibility in higher education to introduce our students to the essential skill of networking. Seeing this happen

in live form through this event is always a highlight of my career," said Savannah Robin, event co-organizer and lecturer of career and professional development within the Martin Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment and UK Ag Equine Programs. "There is no better way to build this skill than by practicing it and doing that within the industry they plan to work in."

UK Ag Equine Programs began a standalone equine career fair in 2009. In 2022, the college's equine and distillation programs joined forces to provide enhanced career opportunities to Kentucky and regional college students for two of the state's most recognized industries. This year, an agribusiness emphasis joined the career fair for job seekers and

prospective employers to meet.

Ilka Balk, the other co-organizer of the event and associate director of the James B. Beam Institute for Kentucky Spirits, also reflected on the satisfaction in seeing job seekers and prospective employers successfully match up.

"Seeing the students 'work' the fair to make the best first impressions and then follow this up with their impressive resumes and accomplishments is truly fantastic to witness," Balk said. "The students kept our employer representatives busy the entire time, and I am confident this fair is the beginning of many students' future internships and full-time careers."

One of the students who took advantage of the face-to-face time,



gaining valuable networking experience, industry insight and improved professional skills was Mei Mei Baileys, an equine science and management junior.

"The Kentucky Signature Industries Career Fair was an excellent opportunity to focus my attention to employers from the equine and agribusiness industries. As a junior, being able to have multiple businesses with possible job and internship opportunities in one place allowed me to see what everyone offers in a short time frame," Baileys said. "Networking is a large part of the equine and agriculture industries, so having the ability to do that was extremely valuable. I now have a better idea of what companies and employers I want to work with in the future."

That sentiment was echoed by Kennedy Burr, a marketing and agricultural economics senior.

"The Signature Industries Career Fair was filled with employers that showed a genuine interest in the community and prospective applicants from UK," Burr said. "This event was a great way to network with important companies and get our names into the professional world. I left the fair feeling confident in myself and ready to tackle my future career path."

For Isaac Downs, a senior business management major with an international business minor, who is also enrolled in the distilling wine and brewing sciences certificate, attending the fair helped him explore multiple positions he's interested in after graduating.

"Seeing Kentucky's biggest industries made me proud to be from Kentucky and excited to see what they hold for me," Downs said. "Going to the career fair was extremely helpful in kickstarting the postgrad job search and meeting professionals in the industry I aspire to work in."

Aslihan Spaulding, chair of the Department of Agricultural Economics was impressed by the number of students and employers that participated.

"It was great to see the representatives from the agribusiness industry engaging with our exceptional students, fostering meaningful conversations about career prospects, internships and academic paths. I was particularly impressed by the significant number of freshman students who attended the fair," Spaulding said.

Buffalo Trace Distillery, under Sazerac, has been a longtime participant of UK's fair. According to Nick Eimers, distillery assistant manager and UK alum, the company continues to participate because they've found a lot of great job candidates at the fair.

"We really enjoy meeting people in person," Eimers said. "Doing interviews over Zoom calls is always a good option but actually meeting people in person and getting a first impression, going through their experiences and what their desires are long term in their careers, it just all kind of works."





A representative from Farm Credit Mid America, the event lunch and student resource room sponsor, echoed that sentiment.

"We decided to participate again this year because we are a rural lender and financier and we know that UK produces really good quality students and they have a really good program here," Joshua Southerling, HR generalist, who is also a UK alum, said. "It just makes sense for us to be involved and engaged in the students here with the university."

Becky Gilchrist, educational coordinator, and Jen Zimmerman, event coordinator, both from Spy Coast Farm, stressed the importance of connections in building a career.

"Every job I've ever had has led from one into the other, so it's great to connect at these kinds of events," Gilchrist said. "We attend this fair because we find great candidates for our internship program as well as employees. We have employees on the farm that are UK graduates as well."

Zimmerman, a UK equine alum, was shared as a case in point.

"I think the career fair is really a special moment for all of us to get together because there are so many alumni at this event. I'm glad that we're all wearing alumni stickers today. I was at this career fair as a student only two years ago and I was very intimidated to go and start talking to employers," Zimmerman said. "But seeing that alumni sticker that somebody went through the program that I went through is really easy to start the conversation with. You know, you have a mutual connection. So really try and network with alumni."

The fair was applicable to students finishing up their academic careers as well as those starting out.

"As a freshman just starting school in MG-CAFE, I did not go to the career fair in search of anything in particular. I went just to explore options and opportunities that could potentially be available," said Matthew Mitchell, an agricultural economics major. "I was very satisfied with the information I got and people I had conversations with, and I would definitely recommend this career fair to anyone seeking opportunities within the agricultural industry."

On the other end of the journey, equine senior Bethany Smith reflected on the importance of the event.

"As I prepare to graduate, attending the Signature Industries Career Fair is an important step for me to explore potential career opportunities, gain insight into different industries and build meaningful connections with professionals in my field," Smith said. "This experience has not only helped me better understand the pathways available after graduation but also allowed me to begin establishing relationships that can guide and support my professional growth in the equine industries."



# UK Equine *Weekend of Service*



November  
**1**

&



November  
**2**

**Proudly Serving:**

- African Cemetery No. 2
- BraveHearts Equine Center
- Central KY Riding for Hope

*Scan QR code to  
sign up or follow:*

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/30E0B4CAFAB2FABFA7-59083105-2025#/>






Ag Equine Programs

**Martin-Gatton**  
College of Agriculture,  
Food and Environment

The 2025 Weekend of Service signups are now live! This is your chance to give back to our beloved equine industry through a weekend of goodwill and networking. Follow the link below to secure your time, location and t shirt size. This year we are proudly serving African Cemetery No. 2 on Nov. 9 and BraveHearts Equine Center and Central KY Riding for Hope on Nov. 1-2.

If you need transportation, it will be offered to African Cemetery No. 2 and BraveHearts Equine Center. Please email [equine@uky.edu](mailto:equine@uky.edu) to secure your seat and note, seats will be available on a first come, first served basis. We hope to see you all out and about!

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/30E0B4CAFAB2FABFA7-59083105-2025>





**EQUINE DOWNUNDER: A SURVEY OF THE EQUINE  
INDUSTRY IN:**

*Australia*



**APPLY BY  
DEC 1**

**PROGRAM**



May 11-21, 2026



Australia



EQM 396

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- Explore Australia's Equine Industry with visits to equine facilities, breeding farms, and racing operations
- Guided experiences at the world-renowned Australia Zoo
- Deepen cultural understanding with an Aboriginal-led cultural tour
- Experience Australia's landscapes on horseback while also visiting rural communities local vineyards, and regional industries

**FACULTY LEADS**

Fernanda  
Camargo



Holly  
Wiemers





# EMPLOYED IN THE EQUINE INDUSTRY?

Please take a few minutes to share your experiences working in the equine industry as a barn hand, exercise rider, groom, working student, and/or assistant trainer.

## INVESTIGATORS

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 **Martin-Gatton**  
College of Agriculture,  
Food and Environment

 **Research**

We invite you to take part in a research study conducted by the University of Kentucky to gather your input on equine workplace conditions. We anticipate this survey will take about 10-20 minutes of your time.

To access the survey, please use this link: [https://uky.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_eQHcu78L6toQ8FE](https://uky.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eQHcu78L6toQ8FE)

C. Jill Stowe, research faculty in the Department of Agricultural Economics, is in charge of this study. If you have questions about the study, you can contact Dr. Jill Stowe at (859)257-7256 or at [jill.stowe@uky.edu](mailto:jill.stowe@uky.edu).

# GENEROUS DONATION BY BRAVEHEARTS EQUINE CENTER HELPS ENABLE UK EQUINE STUDENT ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION



HERE, STUDENTS TAKE THE BRAVEHEARTS VAN ON ITS MAIDEN ADVENTURE TO AN EQUINE EXPERIENCE DAY AT LOCUST TRACE HIGH SCHOOL IN LEXINGTON.

There are many experiential learning opportunities in and around Lexington, but not all college students are able to take advantage of them because they don't have access to a vehicle.

Enter the newest member of the UK Ag Equine Programs' team, a passenger van affectionately nicknamed "Black Beauty" by some of the group.

The BraveHearts Equine Center passenger van was generously donated by David and Ruth Waronker, program board members and founders of Bluegrass Drafts Equine Rescue Inc. who own BraveHearts Equine Center, a horse rescue in Paris, Kentucky.

"We are incredibly grateful for this generous gift from long-time supporters and friends of UK Ag Equine Programs, BraveHearts Equine Center. The addition of this passenger van will greatly enhance our students' access to hands-on learning experiences, industry events and community outreach opportunities," said Caitlin DiBiasie, director of equine philanthropy within the Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment. "Investments like this not only strengthen our programs but also help shape the next generation of equine professionals and leaders."

UK Ag Equine Programs will manage access and use of the van and utilize it to benefit student access and program needs.





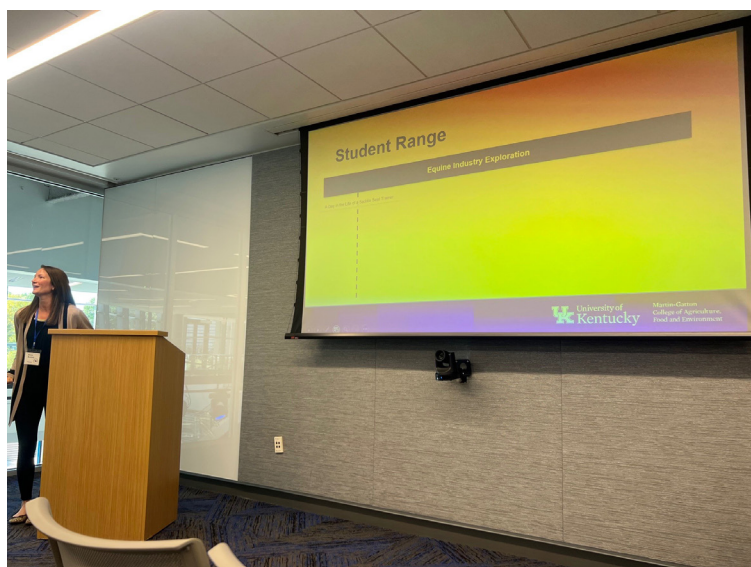
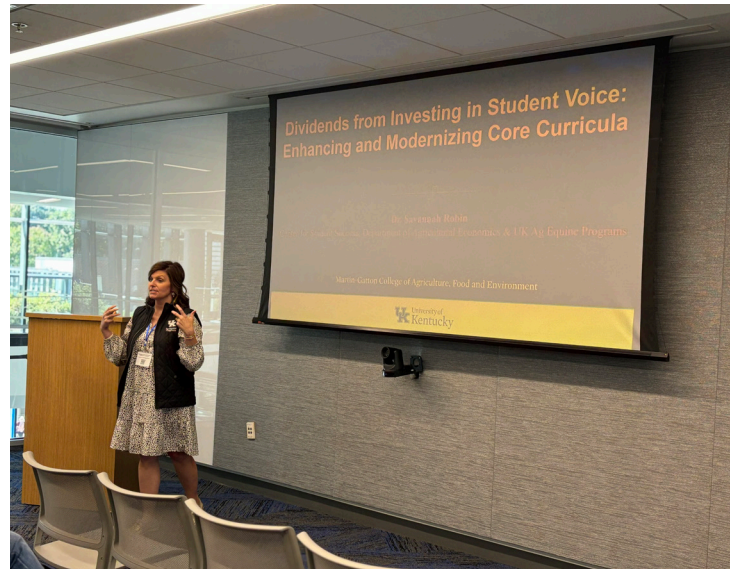
# EQUINE STUDENTS AND INSTRUCTORS PARTICIPATE AT CELT TEACHING EXCELLENCE SYMPOSIUM

*Photos by Mei Mei Baileys and Bethany Smith*

The Center for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching (CELT) hosted the second UK Teaching Excellence Symposium Oct. 10.

The symposium provided a space for UK educators to share examples of exceptional teaching and explore critical issues in teaching and learning through lightning talks and presentations.

Savannah Robin (right), lecturer of career and professional development within the Martin Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment, Alicia Benben (bottom), academic coordinator with UK Ag Equine Programs and Mei Mei Baileys (left), current communications and student relations intern for UK Ag Equine Programs and former participant in the college's Growing Graduates program all presented.







UK Ag Equine Programs' Erica Rugg, administrative assistant, and Mei Mei Baileys communications and student relations intern, attend Spy Coast Farm's Equiconnect Oct. 11. The family friendly community outreach event is an opportunity to connect the local community to resources available within the equine industry.

# Celebrating Your Graduation

Dec. 18  
 Pirri Pavilion at Maine Chance Farm  
 4:30 - 6 p.m.  
 Cording photo at 5:15 p.m.  
*Serving hors d'oeuvres & desserts*

Please RSVP by Dec. 4



[https://uky.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_eeQxHbtmL6FaZym](https://uky.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eeQxHbtmL6FaZym)



**Martin-Gatton**  
 College of Agriculture,  
 Food and Environment  
 Ag Equine Programs





## Ag Equine Programs

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