After winning the Horizon League Championship, the Norse men’s basketball team became only the second team since 1970 to make it to the NCAA D-I Tournament in its first year of post-season eligibility.

Support NKU! Look for this giving icon throughout the magazine for ways to support the NKU departments and programs you care about, or log on now to give.nku.edu. Thank you!
Dear NKU Alumni and Friends:

It has been a professional privilege and a personal honor to serve as the fifth president of Northern Kentucky University. Working together, we have enabled our students to succeed, and we have advanced the mission of our University. We have continued to attract outstanding students from across the Commonwealth—and from around the world. Our students are increasingly diverse, and we proudly foster an inclusive community where everyone is respected and empowered. And, because of the talent and dedication of our faculty and our staff, we have graduated record numbers of women and men who will have a lasting impact on the people they serve.

We have enhanced and expanded our campus with the construction of the new Health Innovation Center and with the renovations of Founders Hall and our Campus Recreation Center. Three years ago, we also added a new residence hall. We have a modern and vibrant campus.

We successfully transitioned to NCAA Division I athletics. In our first year of eligibility, our women’s soccer team and our men’s basketball team qualified for NCAA national tournaments by winning Horizon League championships. Their achievements ignited great pride in our University. I am particularly proud that our student-athletes also excel in the classroom. For 11 consecutive semesters, they’ve earned a collective GPA of 3.0 or better. Last fall, they earned a collective GPA of 3.27—an all-time record for our University.

Most importantly, we were finally able to persuade the Governor and the General Assembly to remedy the historic unwarranted funding disparity that has impeded our University’s growth and impact. Next year, we will receive an additional $5.1 million in state support, and there will now be an outcomes-based funding model in Kentucky that ensures that future state support will not be dictated by geographic politics. Although our work is not yet done, we have made great progress—progress that many people believed wasn’t possible.

Jennifer and I are also profoundly grateful for the kindness and generosity you have bestowed upon us and our children.

Thank you,

Geoffrey S. Mearns
President

[ AROUND CAMPUS ]

Engulfed in the green of campus, a student studies on the sunny steps of the Oakley & Eva G. Farris Amphitheatre. This past April, NKU launched its 2017 Sustainability Strategy with a stated goal of becoming completely carbon neutral by 2050. This plan outlines NKU’s sustainability priorities within academics, engagement, operations, and planning and administration.

DID YOU KNOW

An Honors College is coming to NKU.

The Northern Kentucky University Board of Regents recently approved changing the status of the University’s honors program to an Honors College.

The new Honors College will help NKU attract and retain high-achieving students and will help the university provide increased access to first-generation, transfer, and underrepresented minority students.

“This change will establish a reputation for academic rigor within the Honors College and allow us to grow our research and creative activities,” said NKU President Geoffrey Mearns. High standards have been set for admission to the Honors College, but alternative methods of demonstrating excellence will be included in the application process, thus providing access for a diverse group of students. The Honors curriculum will increase to 24 credit hours, which is 20 percent of the total credit hours required for graduation.

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

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I am proud to have played a small role in these achievements. Thank you for your support and encouragement.

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Have a question? Email us at nkumagazine@nku.edu.
ON THE RISE
Norse Men’s basketball makes a mark in its first NCAA Division I Championship
// By Bryan McEldowney

In what was being billed as either David vs. Goliath or the “game with a lot at ‘steak,’” the Northern Kentucky men’s basketball team faced off against No. 2-seed Kentucky in the 2017 NCAA Championship First Round at Bankers Life Fieldhouse in Indianapolis, Indiana. In its first-ever NCAA Division I tournament appearance, the up-and-coming Norse drew one of the nation’s most-decorated programs of all-time in the Wildcats.

The Northern Kentucky and Greater Cincinnati communities rallied in support of the Norse. (Even local restauranteur Jeff Ruby got into the fun by offering free steaks to every NKU student should the team pull off the upset. Hence, the game’s “steak” billing.)

Lavone Holland II provided Norse fans with a memorable moment during the first half when he sliced through the lane, knifing between three defenders and elevating for a one-handed jam. The junior guard finished with a game-high 22 points. Freshman forward Carson Williams also put forth a valiant effort with 21 points and nine rebounds. Though the Norse battled throughout the nationally-televised game on CBS—even pulling within seven points with just under a minute remaining—the Wildcats held on in a 79-70 decision.
This past May, Gerry St. Amand was named interim president of NKU. Amand is no stranger to Highland Heights, having first joined NKU in 1999 as the Dean of the Salmon P. Chase College of Law. In 2006, he transitioned to the role of Vice President for University Advancement, where he stayed for seven years before returning to Chase in a full-time teaching capacity. Amand has also served on the NKU Foundation Board, and has been recognized numerous times for his commitment and contributions to NKU and the community.

**BLACK AND GOLD SAFARI**

Mark your calendar for the fifth annual Black & Gold Safari to support the Young Alumni Scholarship Fund! This year’s event will be held on June 24 at the Cincinnati Zoo. Get wild with one-on-one animal encounters hosted by Cincinnati Zoo staff, a scavenger hunt, music, drinks, and food. There is even face painting for the kids! Register today at alumni.nku.edu.

**NKU, REDS, & AVETT BROTHERS**

Cheer on the Cincinnati Reds at NKU’s annual Night at the Reds on August 26 at Great American Ball Park. Join alumni, faculty, staff students, and friends as our hometown Reds take on the Pittsburgh Pirates. The first pitch is at 7:10 p.m. followed by a concert by The Avett Brothers. Visit alumni.nku.edu for more details.

**LONGTIME PROFESSOR SHARLOTTE NEELY RETIRES IN STYLE**

Sharlotte Neely, an anthropology professor at Northern Kentucky University, ended her 43-year tenure this spring with the launch of the second edition of her book, "Native Nations: The Survival of Fourth World Peoples." The book, which she says was inspired by her students, is being released just as Neely closes her office door for the last time. During her time at NKU, Neely has been honored as an NKU Outstanding Professor, published numerous articles as well as four books, and is a past president of Anthropologists and Sociologists of Kentucky. "Having the second edition of 'Native Nations' published right as I retire," Neely says, "reminds me that retirement is not the end of my career, just the conclusion of one phase of it."

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**JUNE 7-25**

"The 39 Steps," Stauss Theatre

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**JUNE 24**

Black and Gold Safari, Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden

Join fellow alumni, faculty, staff, family, and friends to support the Young Alumni Scholarship Fund at the Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden for NKU’s ninth annual Black and Gold Safari. Enjoy animal encounters, appetizers, live music, silent auction, and private after hours access to the zoo. Tickets are $40 for alumni and $30 for young alumni and include admission to the zoo, parking, and event activities. To purchase tickets, visit alumni.nku.edu.

**JULY 5-23**

"Burger Town," Stauss Theatre

This musical comedy follows the life of Dan O’Riley, a shy fry cook living in Chicago who is making a living at a humble fast food restaurant. Things change dramatically for Dan—and Burger Town—when he accidentally invents the Triangle Burger. For more information, visit commonwealth.nku.edu.

**AUGUST 26**

NKU Night at the Reds, Great American Ballpark

Head to Great American Ball Park for our annual NKU Night at the Reds. Bring a friend or the whole family and join fellow NKU alumni as our hometown Reds take on the Pittsburgh Pirates. The first pitch is at 7:10 p.m. for more information, visit alumni.nku.edu.

**PODCAST SERIES FOR NEW NKU STUDENTS**

Coming to NKU? Have questions? We have answers. Ask NKU introduced a podcast series for new and prospective students of Northern Kentucky University. This three-part series, which includes three dynamic NKU students, as well as the Admissions Director and the Communications Coordinator, tackles questions about registration and orientation process, offers advice to make sure you get the classes you want, and points you toward resources to help new students decide on a major. It also discusses life on and off campus, cool things to do and places to go around the region, the commuter experience, campus housing, meal plans, tips and advice for parking and how to navigate the roundabouts. Check it out at inside.nku.edu/nkumagazine.

**ALUMNI BENEFITS**

Don’t forget! NKU’s Alumni Association provides a variety of exclusive memberships, including scholarships, subscriptions, and discounts at local restaurants, as well as at the Campus Recreation Center, Liberty Mutual, the AAA Club Alliance, and Newport Aquarium. Request your card and check out all of your benefits at alumni.nku.edu.

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THROUGH A REMARKABLE PARTNERSHIP with The University of Kentucky College of Medicine, a medical school is coming to Northern Kentucky University. This past winter, UK announced plans to develop a regional medical school campus in northern Kentucky for four-year medical education. The program is the third regional medical school campus announced by UK designed to increase the overall number of physicians in the Commonwealth. Four-year regional campuses also have been proposed in Bowling Green and Morehead; the campus at Bowling Green is projected to begin enrolling students in 2018, and Morehead sometime thereafter.

The newest UK College of Medicine initiative will be in partnership with NKU and St. Elizabeth Healthcare.

Currently, the UK College of Medicine enrolls 547 students, including 139 in the most recent admitted class—the Class of 2020. UK plans to increase its class size through expansion to these regional campus locations. Local advisory committees will recommend students for admission to the program.

“UK is proud to have the opportunity to partner with the University of Kentucky and St. Elizabeth Healthcare to leverage our individual strengths and the power of our brands to bring professional medical education to northern Kentucky,” says NKU President Geoffrey Mearns. “Among other things, this medical school campus at NKU will help us further the mission of our Health Innovation Center to improve the health of the people that we serve.”

The UK COM-Northern Kentucky campus will be a fully functioning four-year campus, utilizing the same curriculum and assessments as UK’s Lexington campus. Onsite faculty will have UK College of Medicine appointments and teach in small groups. Utilizing state-of-the-art educational technology, they will also provide simulation and standardized patient experiences with lectures delivered from Lexington. Additionally, clinical experiences will occur at St. Elizabeth Healthcare and surrounding community practices.

“This collaboration between St. Elizabeth Healthcare, the University of Kentucky College of Medicine, and Northern Kentucky University beautifully complements St. Elizabeth’s vision of leading Northern Kentucky to become one of the healthiest communities in America,” says NKU alumnus Garren Colvin, president and CEO of St. Elizabeth Healthcare. “Combined with our support of the NKU Health Innovation Center and the recent opening of the St. Elizabeth Training and Education Center, we are incredibly proud to be involved in educating generations of local, bright, talented individuals and helping shape them into the medical leaders of our future.”
THE TICKET PUNCHER

As the Norse battled for the league championship, one former student brought NKU fans—literally by the busload—to cheer them on. // By Brent Donaldson

THE TEXTS AND TWEETS started flying around 2 p.m.—about five hours before the Northern Kentucky University men’s basketball team would beat Youngstown State and earn their shot at a Horizon League title and a possible berth in the NCAA D-I tournament.

Was it true? Was someone really offering NKU students a last-minute, all-expenses-paid trip to the Motor City Madness Horizon League Tournament in Detroit?

“I can confirm that this is a thing that’s happening,” retweeted NKU’s student newspaper, The Northerner. “IF NKU WINS TONIGHT, reads the original post from that afternoon, “there will be a bus leaving from BB&T Arena at 9:30 a.m. There are 55 spots on the bus and they are first come, first serve. The cost of the bus, game ticket, AND hotel for the night will be covered by a very generous alumnus of Northern Kentucky University.”

The man who made this impromptu road trip possible is Christopher Boggs, a former NKU communications major who wanted to share a little Norse joy.

“NKU gave me more than I’ll ever be able give back to her,” Boggs says. “To watch the team come together this year and make a historic run to the Horizon League championship game has been an amazing experience. I don’t need a pat on the back. I do this expecting nothing. In life, I want to try and give more than I receive, and I get so much satisfaction seeing things I do bring joy and happiness to someone’s day. It’s all good.”

THANK YOU

Thank you to our generous donors, who contribute to the success of our students each and every day. We would like to announce two generous gifts: a $113,000 gift to create theEta Rho/Pi Kappa Alpha Richard Murgatroyd Endowed Scholarship, and a $340,000 gift from Toyota USA Foundation to support the Center for Integrative Natural Science and Mathematics (CINSAM) at NKU.

PI KAPPA ALPHA ALUMNI

The Pi Kappa Alpha Alumni Association created theEta Rho/Pi Kappa Alpha Richard Murgatroyd Endowed Scholarship. The $113,000 gift will support academic and leadership academy scholarships for students in good standing with NKU’s PKA fraternity. The gift was made possible by PKA alumni who contributed to a fund over the years to support the fraternity. To make a lasting impact, the alumni decided to use their contributions to create an endowed scholarship. Mr. Murgatroyd says, “The chapter has made great strides on campus and in the community the last few years. I want our scholarship to encourage more men to value their academics and participate in leadership development activities.”

THE TOYOTA USA FOUNDATION

The Toyota USA Foundation invested $340,000 in CINSAM’s Next Generation STEM Classroom Project 2.0, which provides high quality, classroom-embedded professional development in teaching STEM subjects. Teachers develop their skills in inquiry-based and hands-on education that includes engineering concepts and incorporates the outdoors. This phase of the project also develops leaders within and outside northern Kentucky to improve implementation and dissemination of high impact practices. “This program helps address workforce readiness, a key issue for companies throughout the region, by empowering teachers to further prepare students for the next-generation of jobs,” says Mike Goss, president of Toyota USA Foundation. “The results of the first phase of this program were so encouraging that we decided to provide an additional grant to help further scale it to additional school districts.”
MEMORABLE SEASON CULMINATES IN HORIZON LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIP

AS THE FINAL SECONDS REMAINED ON THE CLOCK, senior Cole Murray fought back the emotions as he stepped up to the charity stripe for the final two free throws as the Northern Kentucky University men’s basketball team headed towards its first Horizon League Championship.

Murray sank both free throws, which served as icing on the cake in the 69-63 victory over Milwaukee. The celebration was on. The team came storming onto the court and jumped atop tournament MVP Lavone Holland II in the far corner. A slew of fans screamed and cheered on the Norse, who not only won the league tournament but also punched their ticket to the NCAA Division I tournament MVP Lavone Holland II in the far corner. A slew of fans screamed and cheered on the Norse, who not only won the league tournament but also punched their ticket to the NCAA Division I championship in its first season eligible. —

March Madness brings out the competition, and Victor E. Viking was up to the challenge. Charles Carta, who pens the column “For The Win” for USA Today, annually ranks the mascots of all 68 teams that reach March Madness. “An absolute perfect combination of amazing nickname and incredible mascot. Presenting: Victor E. Viking!” Carta says. Victor’s accolades led to some playful hijinks in an appearance on the set of WLWT (Channel 5) with NKU alumni Sheree Paolello and Mike Dartis.

NORSE TRULY EMBODY THE TERM “STUDENT-ATHLETE”

Northern Kentucky University’s student-athletes continue to raise the bar of excellence, both in their respective sports and in the classroom. The fall 2016 semester was no different, as NKU’s nearly 250 student-athletes combined for a department record 3.28 cumulative GPA.

This marked the fifth-straight semester with at least a 3.2 GPA and 11th-consecutive above a 3.0. “This fall’s 3.28 cumulative GPA is truly remarkable,” says Ken Bosthof, Director of Athletics. “This success is a testament to the quality of student-athletes at Northern Kentucky University. Strong academic success is also related to the hard work, care and concern exhibited by our academic services department, including Debbie Kirch, Kain Holland, and their support staff.”

SPRING SPORTS UPDATES

Softball - Softball had impressive efforts against two ranked opponents, opening the season against No. 12/10 Georgia. The Norse later led No. 17/16 Kentucky through four innings before falling 2-1.

Men’s Tennis - Men’s tennis swept the Horizon League weekly honors twice this season, with Mate Virag (two-time Player of the Week). Lukas Clemens, Javier Araya, and Andrew Nihusau earning distinctions.

Women’s Tennis - The tandem of Margita Sunjc and Klara Skopac play in the No. 1 doubles spot for the Norse. Sunjc tops the singles lineup and Skopac holds down the No. 2 spot with just five losses between the pair so far.

Baseball - Todd Arenal captured his 500th win as NKU’s head coach in a win over Miami (Ohio) on March 22 before opening Horizon League play by sweeping Milwaukee at Bill Aler Ballpark Complex, which recently received new artificial turf renovations.

Men’s Golf - Jacob Poore put together quite a stretch for the men’s golf team, earning two top-10 finishes in a stretch of three tournaments during the spring season.

Women’s Golf - Women’s golf went on a record-breaking streak in the Cardinal Classic hosted by Ball State, establishing new 18-, 36- and 54-hole team records in a 48-hour period.

Men’s Track & Field - Men’s track & field had 10 players sitting in the top-five of the League’s outdoor rankings with a month left in the season.

Women’s Track & Field - Women’s track & field finished fourth in the Horizon League Indoor Championship and, as of the end of March, was positioned well for the outdoor championship with 20 different performances sitting in the top-five of the league rankings.

MEN’S SOCCER ALUM BEATTIE WINS FAI CUP IN IRELAND

Six years after leading the Northern Kentucky men’s soccer team to a 2010 Division II National Championship, former Norse men’s soccer player and 2010 National Division II Player of the Year Steven Beattie helped Cork City FC capture the Irish Daily Mail FAI Cup in his home country of Ireland in November.

The midfielder assisted the only goal of the game, coming in the final minutes to seal a 1-0 victory over Dundalk. The Sterries, Ireland, native won the FAI Cup for CCFC 24 years after his uncle, Mick Neville, accomplished the same feat.

Beattie, the most decorated soccer player in NKU history, was inducted into the Northern Kentucky Athletics Hall of Fame in February, 2017 along with the entire 2010 national championship squad. In addition to his national Player of the Year honor Beattie was the Daktronics Player of the Year in 2008 and 2010 and was a three-time All-American for NKU.

Beattie played for the Norse from 2007 through 2010. He was selected 13th overall by Toronto FC in the 2010 MLS Draft and signed a two-year contract with CCFC prior to the 2016 season after playing for Sligo Rovers FC in Sligo, Ireland. — Melissa Powell ’17

WINNERS & LOSERS

Five men’s tennis players from NKU qualified for the NCAA Men’s Tennis Championships. The most surprising was Andrew Nihusau, who was ranked 24th in the country for the spring season.

MEN’S SOCCER

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Over the next several months the leaders would advise the CPE on the budget needs of their respective institutions, and then, as they usually did, unanimously sign off in November on its proposal to the General Assembly.

Having taken over as NKU’s president the previous August from the University’s longtime leader, Dr. James C. Votruba, Mearns was new to the job but not unfamiliar with the issues that NKU was facing. Under Votruba’s leadership, NKU had experienced fantastic increases in enrollment, graduates, and program offerings. But that rapid growth had been met with diminished state support. Scarred by the 2008 recession, legislators were on their way to slashing hundreds of millions of dollars from the Commonwealth’s higher education budget by 2015.
ultimately lead Kentucky to change how it financially supports its universities. It also secured the legacy of Mearns—not just at NKU, but across the Commonwealth’s higher education community.

THE HISTORY OF PERFORMANCE BASED FUNDING IS ONE OF FITS AND STARTS

The story begins in 1979 when Tennessee became the first state to experiment with it. Several states eventually followed its lead throughout the next two decades, including Connecticut, Missouri, and, ironically enough, Kentucky in 1992. Through the 1990s, a total of 18 states had adopted some form of performance-based funding. It was a mix of approaches, with some states like South Carolina pegging 100 percent of its higher education budget to formula, while others offered it as a bonus program that fell outside their universities’ base budgets.

But as the economy weakened in a post-9/11 world, and as Republicans, who were largely supportive of performance-based measures, ceded political ground to Democrats, these approaches were scaled back or eliminated completely.

It was only in the wake of the 2008 economic recession that states began to revisit performance-based funding. By 2016, 32 states had instituted performance-based funding policies, many with more finely tuned metrics (degree completion, for example) than had existed with prior models.

The growing use of performance-based models is not a random development. Since the 1980s, state support hasn’t matched the growth in enrollment demand, placing more of the burden on students to cover ever-increasing tuition costs. Over the last 37 years, student-paid dollars has more than tripled. These two developments are not unrelated. As public funds have dried up, the onus has been put on colleges to justify the state appropriations they do receive.

“This is a real concern that too many students are falling through the cracks,” Julie Bell, education program director for the National Conference of State Legislators, told The Washington Post in May 2016. “States have also had to struggle to keep up the pace of funding over the years with tight budgets and requirements to fund healthcare and prisons. States have been looking for a different approach to funding higher education. Legislators find performance-based funding appealing because it balances one of their most significant levers, which is funding, with one of their most significant responsibilities, which is accountability.”

But performance-based funding is not without criticism. Last year the Century Foundation, a progressive think tank based in New York City, published a paper that argued these models only reinforced disparities between universities and did little to actually improve the results they were built upon.

But what if the existing funding approach already greatly
Their charge: To have something finished on December 1, 2016, that could be put before the full Senate and House for a vote. As work mounted in Frankfort, Meorns and Adam Caswell, NKU’s Assistant Vice President for Government, Corporate and Foundation Engagement, spearheaded a grassroots effort to corral support for a new funding model.

Launched in late 2015, Invest in Success—a website funded by the NKU Foundation that enabled citizens to contact their legislators and advocate for a new funding model—spread to NKU leaders across the region. Chambers of commerce, city commission meetings, non-profits all took notice. “If there was a group that really wanted chances are we spoke to them about NKU’s funding disparity and legislative priorities,” Caswell says.

But simply raising the volume on the issue wasn’t enough. Meorns and Caswell wanted their audiences to act. “They encouraged them to contact their local legislators, and through a widget on the project’s website, it allowed constituents to do so in a matter of seconds. But would the effort make the difference?

The University’s leaders received their answer at a campus town hall in October 2015 at NKU’s Student Union Center, where some 200 people turned out to hear Mearns and others make their case for reform. It was a key moment. “I wanted to make the point that this wasn’t just a crazy idea and that we needed to really think about how we’re funding higher education,” Bevin says.

And then the process received a shot in the arm from Bevin. At his first State-of-the-Commonwealth address on January 26, 2016, the Governor laid out the need for a performance-based model. As a point of reference, he specifically mentioned NKU’s $10.7 million funding disparity.

“If there was a group that met regularly, chances are we spoke to them about NKU’s funding disparity and legislative priorities,” Caswell says.

It was these circumstances that prompted Mearns to act in May 2013. With a commitment in place to change the state’s approach, CPE teamed with a group of consultants to develop a working funding model to examine whether state dollars were being applied. By early 2016, the group had dissolved and the fate of crafting a working agreement that could be put before legislators looked uncertain. And then the process received a shot in the arm from Bevin. At his first State-of-the-Commonwealth address on January 26, 2016, the Governor laid out the need for a performance-based model. As a point of reference, he specifically mentioned NKU’s $10.7 million funding disparity.

“I wanted to make the point that the problem was just a crazy idea and that we needed to really think about how we’re funding higher education,” Bevin says. And it’s more something than a very specific, easy-to-get-your-head-around number. And both Northern and Western were schools that everybody knew.

30 percent of funds are based on student success and outcomes, 35 percent tied to total student credit hours, and 30 percent based on supporting important campus operations and student support.

For the coming budget cycle, beginning July 1, the model will apply to just 5 percent of the budget, around $45 million. But it comes with a “hold harmless” provision so that no money will actually be moved from one university to another. The next year, the full budget will run through the model but with a one percent cap on how much money a university can lose from the budget’s application. The following year, the cap goes to two percent.

Like a workable piece of legislation, the new law was the product of compromise. There was considerable debate between the university leaders, for example, on how much, if any, out-of-state students should be valued in the metrics. Border universities, like NKU, whose student body is populated by a considerable number of Ohio residents, wanted them to be counted just like in-state students. “I don’t think that’s good public policy,” Meorns says of the latter position. “But I understand the politics of it.” In the end, the group agreed to count non-residents at 50 percent.

There was also disagreement over how to measure the price of delivering a credit hour. Research institutions like the University of Kentucky where there’s a higher cost structure to deliver an English 101 credit than at NKU or Western, successfully fought for a larger reimbursement from the state.

“Again, I don’t think that’s good public policy,” Meorns says. “Why should the state value of an English credit be more at UK than at Morehead?” But that compromise was necessary to bring the research institutions into the fold.

OF COURSE, THIS ISN’T JUST A STORY about education funding. Drill down deeper, and you’ll see it’s really about Kentucky’s future. From university leaders like President Meorns to legislators to the governor, the conversation has been about how to incentivize universities to respond to the changing demands of the economy, they can better provide a stronger, more adaptable workforce.

Bevin believes Kentucky has an opportunity to become a hub of advanced manufacturing. What Germany is to Europe, he thinks the Commonwealth can be to the rest of the United States. But to attract those employers, to bring those jobs to the state, you need a qualified labor pool. He and other supporters of the bill think Kentucky is in a better position to do that.

“You cannot become the hub of excellence without the right workforce,” he says. “You cannot have the right workforce if you’re not being innovative and preparing your students.”

New requirements for students would be applied. By early 2016, the group had dissolved and the fate of crafting a working agreement that could be put before legislators. "I never forget coming back to my office [after the meeting] and thinking how many messages had been sent," he recalls. "I turned on my computer and saw that 100 people had sent around 400 messages. They'd been doing it during the meeting, right on their phones. People have passion for NKU, and they realized this was an important issue.

The groundwork never let up. In all, more than 3,600 residents sent more than 4,000 messages to their legislators.

A LITTLE MORE THAN FOUR YEARS after President Mearns began to push his fellow university presidents to get behind a different funding approach, Governor Beshear signed into law the state’s new performance-based model on March 21, 2017.

Senate Bill 153, which adopts the model created by the CPE’s second working group, breaks down the funding in three distinct ways:
From his five-year strategic plan to securing a new higher-ed funding model for the Commonwealth, President Geoffrey S. Mearns has made a lasting impact at Northern Kentucky University.

**TIMELINE OF SUCCESS**

The NKU Board of Regents approves “Fuel the Flame,” NKU’s 2013–2018 strategic plan with a paramount goal of student success.

Northern Terrace opens as NKU’s seventh campus-living option, bringing the total number of NKU residents to more than 2,000.

NKU becomes a tobacco-free campus.

RICH BOEHNE (’81) AND THE SCRIPPS HOWARD FOUNDATION donate $1 million to the Boehne First Family Generation Scholarship fund.

In a public address, Governor Matt Bevin recognizes the funding disparity that has impeded the growth of NKU and proposes allocating substantial additional state support for the University.

The carpentry rebuilds the Health Innovation Center and renovates Founders Hall.

In its biennial budget, the Kentucky General Assembly authorizes $97 million in state funds to design and construct the Health Innovation Center and renovate Founders Hall.

Five years ago, when I began advocating for the creation of an outcomes-based funding model, someone familiar with the legislative process told me, “There was no way this chance would ever happen.”

In its first year of post-season eligibility, the NKU men’s basketball team wins the Horizon League championship and becomes the first basketball team in the University’s history to make it to the NCAA Tournament.

The NKU women’s soccer team makes history by capturing the University’s first D-I conference championship in the Horizon League and becoming the first NKU team to play in the NCAA Tournament.

In a public address, Governor Matt Bevin recognizes the funding disparity that has impeded the growth of NKU and proposes allocating substantial additional state support for the University.

The NKU Board of Regents votes to form School of the Arts (SOTA), the first school of its kind in Kentucky that combines music, visual arts, and theatre and dance.

NKU announces partnership with St. Elizabeth Healthcare, including an $8 million investment to support the Health Innovation Center.

Jefferson Community and Technical College joins Gateway2NKU, a program designed to make earning a bachelor’s degree in northern Kentucky seamless and affordable.

In 1998, NKU participates in its first NCAA Division I competition.

NKU becomes a tobacco-free campus.

Northern Terrace opens as NKU’s seventh campus-living option, bringing the total number of NKU residents to more than 2,000.

First official day takes place on August 1; Mearns begins strategic planning process.

NKU and Gateway Community and Technical College announce Gateway2NKU partnership, a program designed to make earning a Bachelors Degree in Northern Kentucky seamless and affordable. The program grows to include Cincinnati State Technical and Community College and Jefferson Community and Technical College.

Mearns officially sworn in as President during installation ceremony.

The Kentucky General Assembly agrees to increase NKU’s state appropriation by $5.1 million in the second year of the biennium, while state leaders commit to adopt an outcomes-based funding model.

For the first time since 2004, NKU hosts more than 360 top Kentucky high school students as part of Governor’s Scholars Program.

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right now, you are making a value judgment tied to basic economic principles. If you read on, the risks of your investment include wasted time, potential loss of benefits gained through a different activity, and the risk of placing value in potentially misleading information. But because so many of us fail to view everyday decisions through the lens of economics, our choices often work against our best interests and our personal finances are a mess. Only 46 percent of Americans have saved more than $10,000 for retirement. Despite the lessons we should have learned from the Great Recession, we added $892 billion in new credit-card debt in 2016—the most since 2007. And nearly two thirds of us can’t calculate interest payments correctly. When the National Financial Educators Council recently asked young adults aged 18–24 “What high school-level course would benefit your life the most?” the majority (51.4 percent) responded “money management.” Yet we don’t do it.

Northern Kentucky University economics professor Dr. Abdullah Al-Bahrani is a man whose mission is to speak financial literacy and economics a core element of education across every age and economic stratum. He plies his trade through the cultural currency of today’s students—pop culture, social media, music, and film—not in an effort to be hip, but because economics is about getting the most satisfaction out of life with the least amount of cost. If you can find a way to teach that to today’s youth, you can save the country and the planet from suffering the next global depression, one student at a time.

He showed his students ISSPs’s “30 for 30” documentaries—particularly an episode called “Once Brothers.” The film centers on former Yugoslavia national basketball teammates Vlade Divac and Drazen Petrovic, best friends torn apart by geopolitical, ethnic, and ideological divides within their country during the Yugoslav War. When one friend dies unexpectedly, the other is overwhelmed with regret and heartbreak. That emotion became real for Al-Bahrani’s students, who suddenly realized how a government’s structure can impact personal relationships and friendships.

And that’s economics,” Al-Bahrani says. “It allows me to put history in motion with economic education. That’s something that my students appreciate a lot—the power of storytelling—because economics is typically taught in a very dry way of supply versus demand. But the why or the how is never explained. I want students to feel what a recession feels like. I want them to feel how excited everybody was during the housing boom and how people thought it was never going to end.”

Dr. Abdullah Al-Behrani was born in 1981 in Muscat, Oman, where he lived only briefly as a child during two separate parts of his youth. Memories of his late childhood are tied largely to his mother, Sana Al-Bahrani, as she pursued her Ph.D. in education and curriculum design from the University of Louisville. His father, Abbas Al-Bahrani, an economist for the Sultan of Oman, had to stay back. Young Abdullah often went with his mom as she attended night classes on UofL’s campus and studied late into the morning hours before heading home.

“Why is a Ph.D. felt like it was possible for me,” Al-Bahrani says, “because I saw how she went through it. She went through the hard work, but she did it with two teenagers while my dad had a job. She was in a new city, did it with two teenagers while my dad had a job. She went through the hard work, but she did it with two teenagers while my dad had a job. She was in a new city, but she made it happen. She went through the hard work, but she made it happen. And that’s why economics is about getting the most satisfaction out of life with the least amount of cost.”
“It teaches them two things,” Al-Bahrani says. “It teaches them to look around, right? Try to see economics in their personal life. And it teaches them to explain it—to explain the economics. At first, students don’t like that assignment. ‘You’re jumping on the bandwagon of a fad, right? You’re trying to be cool using the term “selfie.”’ But after they submit that first assignment, usually the response is ‘I can’t stop seeing economics now.’”

To create Econ-Beats, Al-Bahrani partnered with colleagues in NKU’s Electronic Media and Broadcasting—a program housed across campus in the College of Informatics. Students are tasked with choosing a popular song, rewriting the lyrics using an economic theme and lexicon, recording the audio, and producing a music video as the final product. At the end of each semester, Al-Bahrani and his colleagues host an open screening where people from across the city get to vote for their favorite. More than $1,000 in prizes are awarded each semester.

“Dr. Al-Bahrani communicates with students through media and with the language they know and understand,” says Dr. Rebecca Porterfield, Dean of NKU’s Haile/US Bank College of Business. “When students are tasked with putting economics to music and video, all the technology inputs they are familiar with come together in an innovative and creative way—a way that allows for application that leads to real knowledge.”

There are two movements afoot in the United States that are equally related to our collective financial illiteracy. The first—a major focus of Al-Bahrani and NKU’s Center for Economic Education, which he leads—is to begin teaching economics and financial decision making as early as possible. As early as kindergarten, he says.

The second movement seeks to remedy the consequences of not doing the first. Credit card and student loan debt. Underwater mortgages. Our inability to distinguish between a want and a need, or the understanding of how to manage our finances and time. The movement has been loosely described as “adulting,” and the most well-known example may be The Adulting School in Portland, Maine. The school educates adults on matters of health and wellness, home improvement, and economics and financial basics. “You’re smart and capable,” the school’s website says, “your education just didn’t provide you with all the skills you need.”

“I am fortunate to be the dean of a faculty that is highly talented,” Dr. Porterfield says. “When you witness the abilities and talent of an individual like Dr. Al-Bahrani, and know his knowledge of his field is strong, you just move out of the way and cheer him on.”
Ethnic minorities are more fearful toward robots because their jobs are threatened, especially females, the older generation, the less educated, lower income, and those in low-paying jobs who may take over the world, afraid that they may become self-aware in the future. And the results said that about 26 percent are either fearful of heights, fear of public speaking, crime. And I was lucky to give a presentation about the role of reciprocity in persuasive robots. How did you survey this?

In your research about human distrust and fear of robots, you specifically measured humans’ fear of robots that can make their own decisions. How did you survey this information and what were your findings?

We had a national survey about fear of everything—spiders, fear of heights, fear of public speaking, crime. And I was lucky to give a presentation at a university. I said to the students: “I want to contribute to society in the future by examining robot potential.”

In one of your class presentations, you show your students a photo of a family gathered happily around an Amazon Echo, and next to the photo you’ve placed the words “Mindlessness and fixed pattern response.” Are technologies like Siri and Alexa training us to trust A.I.? Is that dangerous?

I like that picture very much because the family is so immersed in conversation with the Echo. It’s not even human-like—it’s just a cylinder. But it has a human voice, so people are talking to Alexa as if it is human. If people think logically, there is no point of complying with a robot’s request. But people aren’t attentive to the fact that robots are just machines with CPUs and batteries and actuators. People comply, and use the norms of human interaction in the context of human-robot interaction.

Which is exactly what your co-authored paper, titled “The Role of Reciprocity in Verbally Persuasive Robots,” is all about, right?

Robots used to be confined in the factory cages, like welding machines and pressing machines. But now they are among us and working with us as a team. The basic skill in team building and collaboration is communication and persuasion. In other countries, there are humanoid robots in places like banks, grocery stores, cell phone stores, everywhere. And their job is to sell something to people: a new data plan, an awesome cruise package. But there is no theoretical research behind it. So that study was about demonstrating the robot’s potential to influence people, and as you saw from the results it was unequivocal: robots are very effective at persuading people and utilizing some principles of persuasion from human communication.

For this research, you programmed one of your robots to assist students who were playing a “Jeopardy!”-like quiz game. Essentially, the robots gave some students the correct answers, and other students the wrong answers. After the game, the robot then asked the students for assistance. What were your findings?

If you think logically, there is no point for the participant to help the robot. The robot will not be mad if you don’t help him back. The robot will not call you a moocher or an ingrate. But we found that 63 percent of people who received help from the robot for five minutes agreed to help the robot for 15 minutes. When the robot was not really helpful, then only 30 percent (reciprocated). Huge difference.

In other words, it didn’t matter whether participants considered the robot friendly or competent or trustworthy—it only mattered whether the robot was viewed as being helpful.

And that is consistent with the literature in human communication. We trust in normal reciprocity because it is one of the most robust norms in human interactions. So that was our first tab, to document the role of reciprocity in human-robot interaction.
This past semester we honored, we cheered, and we celebrated. Take a look back at the Alumni Awards where we honored four exceptional alumni and supporters, our annual Chili Cookoff, Homecoming, and the men’s basketball team’s first trip to the big dance. What a ride!

2017 Outstanding Alumni Awardee, Mary Zalla, enjoys the Alumni Awards reception with her daughter Cecilia.

Alumni and NKU friends catch up with each other during the Alumni Awards reception.

2017 Outstanding Young Alumnus Awardee, Jason Merrick, accepts the Distinguished Young Alumnus Award.

The NKU Black Alumni Council held a reunion brunch to close out Homecoming weekend. They invited undergraduate student leaders from several black student organizations to connect with and network.

Alumni celebrating NKU’s berth into the NCAA Tournament at the official NKU Alumni pre-game reception at Punch Bowl Social Indianapolis.

Congratulations to our most spirited alumni, Jason Garner and Ali Hedges, at the Braxton Game Watch! They each received a prize for sharing their Norse pride.

Alumni Board of Directors’ president, Tom Wiedemann, addresses the crowd.

Alumni celebrating NKU’s first trip to the NCAA Tournament with other alumni and fans at Punch Bowl Social in Indianapolis.

Alumni Kelsey Barthett and Jacqueline Marcy celebrate our first trip to the tournament with other alumni and fans at Punch Bowl Social in Indianapolis.

2017 Strongest Influence Awardee, Dr. Lynne Smith with student presenter, Megan Louis.

2017 Distinguished Service Awardee, Marty Butler, enjoys the reception.

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They Call Me Coach Fields

Warner Bros.’ Derek Fields turned collegiate hobby into lifelong career

Learn from your losses. Evaluate your competitors. Practice, practice, practice.

Derek Fields learned many lessons during his time on Northern Kentucky University’s basketball court. The 1990 graduate of NKU’s radio, television, and film program is still motivating his team and teaching them the strategies of success. But today, Fields serves as vice president of sales and retail business development at Warner Bros. Entertainment. There, he focuses on strategies to get Warner Bros. brands into the hands of consumers, and collaborates with the right people to make it happen. But his experience on the court and as a member of NKU’s Basketball Hall of Fame has never left him. “They call me Coach Fields at work,” Fields says. “I think that’s been one thing I’ve been blessed with—to take everything that’s been given to me and give that back to the people I work with. I want someone to take away what they’ve learned from me and instill it in someone else. That’s how we get better as individuals. I’m all about building other people up and creating something dynamic.”

Fields teaches his team to play fast, play fair, and always work for something better—inside and outside the office. He has his coaching hat on no matter where he goes. “That might be because the former point guard, who ranks No. 6 on NKU’s all-time scoring list with 1,664 points, always has the principles of basketball on his mind. His dedication to the Norse earned him NCAA Division II third team All-America honors and the Great Lakes Valley Conference Player of the Year title in 1989.

After graduating from NKU, Fields was drafted into the Continental Basketball Association (CBA), a now-defunct professional men’s basketball minor league, and shot hoops for a few seasons with the Columbus Horizon. He was offered a chance to play professionally in England, but Fields had his heart set on something bigger. “I wanted to be an NBA All-Star,” he says. “Honestly, I didn’t know a whole lot about playing overseas and making money to get experience and come back. When I got my first offer, they said they would pay me $20,000 to go overseas. I was like, England? No, I’m going to the NBA. We all had that dream.”

When Fields stopped playing basketball professionally a few years later, he took his court skills and radio, television, and film degree and went into another competitive arena: sales. He began in an entry-level sales position at Kraft selling perishable and nonperishable food items to area grocery stores. For the next 20 years, Fields worked his way up the corporate ladder, keeping his eyes open for any opportunity to advance—from Kraft to Corning Consumer Products, to Sara Lee, to Schwarz Retail Supply Services, to a 12-year stint as the director of sales at Disney.

When it comes to the myriad of consumer products being marketed to the world, chances are Fields has had a hand in touching almost every category. But if there’s one thing he’s learned from his tenure in sales, it’s that the nature of success is tied directly to success in building partnerships.

“Our number one objective is to ensure that not only are we growing our business, but it’s important to have great relationships,” Fields says. “That’s how you find ways to get your end consumer to touch your brands.”

Fields has come a long way since his days on the court in Regents Hall. He never made it to the NBA like he dreamt throughout his childhood, but he’s established himself as a coach, a leader, a mentor at one of the most well-known companies in the world. And he’s happy.

“Everything that happens to us—good and bad—happens for a reason,” Fields says. “We are where we are in our lives because that’s the way it’s supposed to be. Warner Bros. is where I want to end my career, but I’m not finished. I’m a VI and I love what I do. But I’d like to be an executive vice president or president before I’m done. I’d like to be on top. I’d like to be leading and building a team, being a person that’s developing people, and helping and growing our brand.”

Jayna Morris

Derek Fields’ 1985-89 - Fields ranks No. 6 on the pre-Division I era NKU all-time scoring list with 1,664 points (15.3 ppg). He was named Great Lakes Valley Conference Player of the Year in 1989 after scoring an NKU single season record 664 points (23.7 ppg). Fields also earned NCAA Division II third team All-America honors in 1989. During his senior season, he scored 39 points and dished out 11 assists to lead NKU to a 121-111 win at Kentucky State. Fields made his final collegiate game a memorable occasion by pouring in 35 points, dishing out 10 assists and grabbing six rebounds as NKU posted a 124-118 win over Indianapolis.
Fitzpatrick's career began slowly until, as chance would have it, she moved to Los Angeles to get her foot in the door in television writing. Her best work was produced by Christine Jones—a professor at NKU who happens to be the wife of Ken Jones. Over the years, Suzanne and Ken have collaborated on multiple screenplays, including "Divine Will," an award-winning film currently on PureFlix. Though separated by more than 2,000 miles, the two have collaborated on multiple writing projects, including a script for "The Nanny" and a writer for "7th Heaven." Fitzpatrick found work as a receptionist while Jones is going on his 30th year teaching playwriting at NKU. He is also an active member of the Dramatists Guild and the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society while producing shows for NKU and theaters around the region.

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NKU SCHLACHTER UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES PRESENTS...

Mystery Photo!

Solve the Mystery for NKU History!

The clues are hard to come by in this busy, colorful photo of NKU days gone by. You may recognize a couple of era-specific hairstyles, perhaps, or notice a few fashion choices that betray the era. A major clue, however, is Loch Norse—clearly pictured here before the lake’s renovation in 2006. Of course, the biggest clues of all are the dozens of friendly Norse faces pictured at this sunny celebration. Recognize anyone? Do you know the name of the event, or the year it took place? Email your guesses to nkumagazine@nku.edu today, and have a great summer!