

UK honors 2025 Hall of Distinguished Alumni

By [Meredith Weber](#), September 12, 2025

From Kentucky to every corner of the globe, University of Kentucky alumni are shaping lives, advancing knowledge and creating change. This weekend, 20 of those leaders and innovators were inducted into the UK Hall of Distinguished Alumni, the highest honor bestowed by the UK Alumni Association.

Held every five years, the Hall recognizes UK graduates whose achievements bring distinction to the university and inspire current students, faculty and fellow alumni through excellence across the arts, sciences, public service, business, education and beyond. With the addition of the 2025 class, a total of 353 alumni have now received this honor since its inception in 1965.

As part of the ceremony, a special video was shown to the newest inductees, featuring past members of the Hall of Distinguished Alumni welcoming them to this prestigious group and reflecting on the meaning of the honor.

“The newest members of the Hall of Distinguished Alumni are not only graduates of this institution, they are the keepers of our legacy and the teachers of what it means to live our mission of advancing Kentucky,” said UK President Eli Capilouto. “They remind us that the value of a University of Kentucky education is not measured in accolades alone, but in the lives made stronger and the futures made brighter because of their influence.”

The inductees included:

Terry L. Birdwhistell*, Ph.D.

M.A. '74 – History, College of Arts and Sciences

M.A. '78 – Library Science, College of Communication and Information

Ed.D. '94 – Educational Policy Studies and Evaluation, College of Education

Willis K. Bright Jr.

B.A. '66 – Social Work, College of Social Work

Clyde R. Carpenter*

B.S. '59 – Civil Engineering, College of Design

Xiangming “Jack” Cheng, Ph.D.

Ph.D. '00 – Materials Science and Engineering, Stanley and Karen Pigman College of Engineering

M.B.A. '03 – Business Administration, Gatton College of Business and Economics

Rebecca M. Cowen-Hirsch

B.S. '88 – Electrical Engineering, Stanley and Karen Pigman College of Engineering, Lewis Honors College

Ambassador Kelly Craft

B.A. '85 – Topical Studies, College of Arts and Sciences

Brian L. Cury

B.A. '81 – Topical Studies, College of Fine Arts

James “Jimmy” P. Dunne

B.A. '77 – Topical Studies, College of Arts and Sciences, Lewis Honors College

Michael T. Eaves

B.A. '94 – Journalism, College of Communication and Information

