

# UK's President Turns Spotlight on the Stars of Big Blue Academics

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The University of Kentucky's Fabulous Five will be honored Wednesday night (March 2, 2005) at Rupp Arena, Lexington, KY. No, no. Not that Fabulous Five. Not the 1948 basketball team that won UK's first NCAA championship. Not Ralph Beard, Alex Groza, Kenny Rollins, Cliff Barker and "Wah Wah" Jones. I'm talking about today's quality quintet: Dr. David Moliterno, Dr. Subodh Das, Dr. John Connelly, and students Stephanie Logsdon and Conley Chaney. Their pictures will be on 10,000 posters to be handed out at the Kentucky-Tennessee basketball game.

We're talking here about academic stars - three researchers and two students who have brought national acclaim to the Lexington campus.

UK President Lee Todd has been relentless in promoting the achievements of those who do something more (and, in my view, something much more important) than make first downs and field goals.

I'm consistent on this. Long ago, when I was a student serving stew on the Donovan Hall cafeteria line and dishing up irreverent opinion pieces in the UK student newspaper, we actually had a winning football program. In fact, in 1964 we eventually upset Ole Miss, which was ranked No. 1 in the country at the time.

I caused all sorts of trouble, and destroyed what little chance I had of being pledged by any decent fraternity, when I published something in *The Kentucky Kernel* headlined, "What of Quieter Victories?" It argued that the academic breakthroughs and educational triumphs in classrooms and labs were much more important than anything accomplished between the end zones.

I believed it then. I believe it now.

Especially now, when the only way to compete in the information-based economy is to educate Kentucky's kids well and send them to competitive campuses, of the kind emerging at UK, the University of Louisville, Western, Murray and Northern, and at private counterparts such as Centre, Transylvania, Berea and Bellarmine.

OK, OK, I forgot to mention Eastern, Lindsay Wilson and others. I don't have room for all the names. But I do have room for the names, and recent accomplishments, of UK's new Fabulous Five.

Conley Chaney was the 11th UK student to receive one of academia's top honors when he was named a Truman Scholar. That helped his school become a Truman Foundation Honor Institution, along with, for example, Yale, Harvard, Princeton, Stanford, Michigan, USC, UNC-Chapel Hill. You get the picture.

Stephanie Logsdon, like a few other top American students in chemistry, biochemistry and the biological and medical sciences, this year was named a Beckman Scholar, joining an elite group from such institutions as Duke and UCLA.

The National Science Foundation picked Dr. John Connelly to head a \$3 million effort to boost computational research in chemistry, and named UK to join Purdue in this effort.

Dr. David Moliterno is the main investigator in a study involving angioplasty and stent replacement for high-risk heart patients at some 200 U.S. hospitals.

Dr. Subodh Das, an award-winning metallurgical engineer, helps UK stand beside schools with big reputations (MIT, Carnegie Mellon, Georgia Tech) by winning major research grants, while he also heads a campus-affiliated research and consulting business that serves the aluminum industry.

What would Adolph say? Well, he often said that, if it didn't matter whether you won or lost, they wouldn't make scoreboards. Banners in Rupp Arena attest to the winning tradition he started.

That's one reason UK President Lee Todd decided to put up 44 banners around campus, honoring outstanding UK folks, like successful authors, CEOs of Fortune 500 companies and presidents of universities, but no athletes or politicians.

"I'm a big believer in visualizing our success," he explains. "If you go to Rupp Arena, you can see our athletic prowess, but if you walk around most campuses, you can't."

Most people, he argues, have a mental frame for athletic success, but not academic achievement. So week after week, he has been honoring his academic movers and shakers, after the first quarter of football games and during the first timeout at Rupp Arena.

"That's a way to do some guerrilla marketing," he says, although he admits that, as football season went from bad to worse, "I got booed a few times."

"That's OK," he insists. "Let's show people the company we're keeping now." That's what the Fabulous Five poster is all about.

Coming soon, a poster with a great slogan and images of all the hotshot academics UK has hired away from big-deal campuses during Todd's tenure. "We get publicity when we lose somebody, but not when we add somebody from UCLA or MIT," he grumps. The poster will have three UK professorial recruits from Harvard, two from Michigan, and one each from other top-notch campuses.

He wants more of the kind of thing that happened last week when he attended the first meeting of the Secretary of Energy's task force on science and math education. He's one of 10 chosen for this high-powered group, which met at the famous Lawrence lab in Berkeley.

At that meeting, the chief technical officer of Dreamworks teased Todd about having stolen the UCLA hospital system's top guy, Dr. Michael Karpf, to head UK's medical center.

Any way you look at it, that's success.