



A STRATEGIC ROADMAP TO

# ***A DISTINCTIVE KENT STATE***



# INTRODUCTION



Kent State University has served as a leading regional university for Northeast Ohio since its inception as a normal school in 1910. It has produced the most graduates of any of the universities in Northeast Ohio and is considered a major economic engine for the region with close to a \$2 billion economic impact reported in 2010.

There has never been a more opportune time to consider a bold and distinctive future for Kent State. The university has recorded record enrollments on the Kent Campus for seven consecutive years with a concomitant increase in the academic talent of incoming freshman classes. For the 2014-15 academic year, Kent State experienced its highest first-year retention rate (81.7 percent) and produced a record number of degrees (9,778). The current six-year graduation rate of 55.8 percent is the highest in Kent State's history.

Likewise, the recognition of Kent State's academic programs continues to rise with national recognition for programs in fashion, aeronautics, interior design and children's and youth literature. Additionally, our students are participating increasingly in experiential activities with 139 students named on active or pending patents and 948 students participating in study-abroad/study-away opportunities, more than double the national average.

As a result of this growth in academic quality and student success, Kent State jumped 19 points in the 2015 Best National Universities, moving from 194 to 175. This jump was among the top three highest gains achieved of all colleges and universities in the nation.

In addition to the growth in the quality and number of academic programs, Kent State also embarked on a major building plan to ensure that students, faculty and staff are provided 21st-century teaching and learning and research environments. New construction includes the Kent Campus Aeronautics and Technology Building, the new home for the College of Architecture and Environmental Design, the Integrated Sciences Building, the Wick Poetry Center and Park, as well as the Kent State Stark Science and Nursing Building. Renovations provided improved spaces for the Center for Undergraduate Excellence, the Center for the Visual Arts and major improvements in the Science Corridor.

With strong improvements in alumni engagement and annual giving, the Division of Institutional Advancement this winter moved into a new home that brought all advancement staff under one roof for the first time in the university's history. This new facility will set the stage for new levels of fundraising and alumni engagement throughout the next decade.

This Strategic Roadmap for a Distinctive Kent State capitalizes on the rising trajectory and momentum of Kent State University. Realizing that the faculty remains committed to a distinctive blend of teaching and learning, research and creative excellence, our university is poised to accelerate its growth and impact on a national scale. Based on extensive interaction across our eight-campus system, a new vision, mission and core values were adopted along with five major university priorities. The Strategic Roadmap also outlines 16 university-level initiatives that will promote innovation and learning, advance academic program and research excellence, drive regional and global impact and strengthen the university's organizational stewardship.

We believe that the defined Strategic Roadmap identifies the strategies we will employ to further propel a pathway to a nationally distinctive contribution to higher education. We are committed to becoming an exemplar of the new public research university with a distinctive blend of teaching, research and creative excellence.

Beverly Warren  
President

## **PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT**

During the past 18 months, a number of comprehensive assessments have been conducted to provide background information for the formulation of the Strategic Roadmap.

### **COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT OF RESEARCH AND SCHOLARLY ACTIVITIES**

- External Consultant: Brad Fenwick, Elsevier
- 8 meetings, 50+ participants
- Report submitted to president and placed on president's website in January 2015

### **COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT OF INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS**

- External Consultant: Todd Turner and Collegiate Sports Associates
- 12-person Steering Committee
- Survey to constituents (68 percent response rate)
- 45 meetings, 300+ participants
- Report submitted to president and placed on president's website in June 2015
- Strategic Vision Assessment launched in August 2015

### **ONE UNIVERSITY COMMISSION**

- 31-person commission chaired by Provost Todd Diacon
- Survey – 2,900 responses
- 770 participants
- Report submitted to president and placed on president's website in March 2015
- Provost presented results at each of eight campuses in fall 2015

### **STRATEGIC VISIONING ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SVAC)**

- 15-person Advisory Committee co-chaired by Vice President Char Reed and Senior Associate Provost Melody Tankersley
- 1,200+ in-person participants
- BeBoldKSU Campaign – 400+ responses
- May 8 Town Hall conducted
- Phase I Report submitted to president in August 2015
- Phase II initiated September – November 2015

### **160over90 SURVEY**

- 4,000+ responses

### **FORUMS FOR THE FUTURE**

- Seven Regional Campus visits, multiple constituents (faculty, staff, students, advisory boards)
- Four faculty/staff sessions on Kent Campus
- Four student sessions on Kent Campus

### **160over90 TOWN HALLS**

- President's Cabinet and SVAC, October 2015
- President's Administrative Council (PAC) meeting, November 2015
- All-Boards meeting, November 2015
- All-University Communications Advisory Committee, November 2015

## **SOAR ANALYSIS**

A SOAR analysis is a strategic planning tool that focuses an organization on its current strengths, its opportunities and vision of the future. This analysis differs from the commonly used SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis in that it engages all levels and functional areas of an organization while the SWOT analysis is typically a top-down approach to strategic planning. The unique feature of the SOAR analysis is that it focuses on what an organization currently is doing well and how an organization can achieve its preferred future. It also requires that an organization not only imagine its best future, but also establish the measurable results that will indicate the successful achievement of identified strategic goals.

The basic questions to be answered in this analysis, conducted by the SVAC with support from the 160overgo consulting firm, were:

- What are our greatest strengths?
- What are our best opportunities?
- What is our preferred future?
- What are the measurable results that will tell us we have achieved our vision of the future?

## SOAR ANALYSIS RESULTS, AS REPORTED BY SVAC

### STRENGTHS

**Excellence in academics:** A students-first approach to education was a common mission echoed by all campuses. Kent State offers a unique collection of excellent academic programs that span a wide range of interests – nursing, fashion, architecture and more. Outstanding advising opportunities, quality facilities and a strong focus on experiential learning compliment the academic program offerings.

**Freedom in research:** There is a major focus on growing the research footprint of Kent State. Much like the freedom faculty feel in how they teach, they expressed this in research too – there is flexibility in the research conducted and support for creative output as part of this focus. Faculty feel they can do the research that excites them while being supported by the university, and students noted great opportunities to participate in research too.

**Sense of place:** The common thing we heard, as also heard in Dr. Warren’s listening tour, is that Kent State feels like home. There is a genuine, authentic feeling of being welcomed and comfortable, felt on all campuses and across students, faculty, staff and alumni.

**Strength in numbers:** Kent State truly is greater than the sum of our parts. Every campus benefits from being part of a regional system. We heard not only how the Kent Campus makes the Regional Campuses better, but how the Regional Campuses make the Kent Campus better too. The system benefits from all of its parts.

### OPPORTUNITIES

**Exclusively inclusive:** Kent State can be a safe place for all types of people to find themselves and their voices, fail, succeed and ultimately grow. There’s an opportunity to leverage the balance of the open access Regional Campuses and the selective admissions at Kent Campus to position us as a resource and home to so many types of people.

**Rewrite the rules:** “We’re not your parents’ Kent State.” Our university has a huge opportunity now to redefine perceptions and put a stake in the ground that’s positive and memorable. All the parts are in place to let us rewrite the rules.

**One Kent State:** Relatedly, Kent State needs to continue the open dialogue started with the One University Commission to further improve communications and relations across all campuses, and not just between Kent Campus and each Regional Campus. The institution should embrace its strength in numbers and leverage each campus’s success stories better.

**Academic heft & research prowess:** Human and product output is the opportunity here. Kent State needs to get employers, prospective faculty, and others to know and desire the types of graduates the university is producing. It’s happening in nursing, for instance. Let’s grow others. As it relates to research developments, others must want and see value in what Kent State is creating.

### ASPIRATIONS

**Value and valued:** Kent State can be a model for a higher education system that is both accessible and affordable. Kent State can be seen as balanced in providing a truly valued and respected education and, ultimately, a diploma.

**Best-kept secret to acknowledged icon:** The second most-heard feedback behind sense of place, was that the Kent State community is tired of being a “hidden gem,” and the pieces are in place to prove that it is not. Kent State needs to aspire for more acknowledgment and recognition nationwide.

**National powerhouse:** The above starts with determining what exactly Kent State wants to be a leader in, and focusing on growing and expanding our national reputation in that area(s). This will soften the beachhead for the rest of the university’s offerings to follow.

**Kent State pride yesterday, today and tomorrow:** There’s a desire to reengage the classes that had a bad experience, engage more recent alumni with meaningful engagement, and instill stronger school spirit with today’s students so they enter the workforce as contributing alumni.

### RESULTS

**Singular solution:** People should think of Kent State first as their go-to solution for whatever it is that they may be seeking. Truth be told, Kent State has amazing offerings that are broad and for all types of people with all types of needs and expectations. If they want what a place like Kent State has to offer, the institution should be their simple, obvious solution.

**Regional cornerstones:** Kent State is the lifeblood of Northeast Ohio, plain and simple. Continue to support the region’s communities and show how valuable Kent State is not only to these areas, but also to the greater state of Ohio.

**“Kent State genuine” to “Kent State coveted”:** Kent State needs to stay true to its core, but it’s time to be an inspiration and aspiration to fellow institutions. Success is having other universities look to Kent State and say, “They’re doing it right.”

**Societal impact:** It all comes down to impact as an institution of higher education. Kent State strives to advance society and help people find their place in it always, by providing tangible solutions and advancements to real issues.

# VISION, MISSION AND VALUES



## VISION


*To be a community of change agents whose collective commitment to learning sparks epic thinking, meaningful voice and invaluable outcomes to better our society*

## MISSION

*We transform lives and communities through the power of discovery, learning and creative expression in an inclusive environment*

## CORE VALUES

### WE VALUE:

- ▶ *A distinctive blend of teaching, research and creative excellence*
  - ▶ *Active inquiry and discovery that expands knowledge and human understanding*
  - ▶ *Life-changing educational experiences for students with wide-ranging talents and aspirations*
  - ▶ *A living-learning environment that creates a genuine sense of place*
  - ▶ *Engagement that inspires positive change*
  - ▶ *Diversity of culture, beliefs, identity and thought*
  - ▶ *Freedom of expression and the free exchange of ideas*
  - ▶ *A collaborative community*
  - ▶ *Respect, kindness and purpose in all we do*
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# PRIORITIES AND UNIVERSITY-LEVEL INITIATIVES

## **PRIORITY 1: STUDENTS FIRST**

Provide an inclusive and engaged living-learning environment where all students thrive and graduate as informed citizens committed to a life of impact

- Initiative 1.1:** Enhance and expand student success programs systemwide to improve retention and graduation rates
- Initiative 1.2:** Adopt a student engagement strategy that enhances learning through increased participation in high-impact experiences
- Initiative 1.3:** Align the undergraduate educational experience to focus on purposeful and essential learning outcomes
- Initiative 1.4:** Strengthen diversity and the cultural competence of students, faculty and staff systemwide

## **PRIORITY 2: A DISTINCTIVE KENT STATE**

Drive innovation, idea generation and national distinction through top-tier academic and research programs including the recruitment and support of talented faculty and staff

- Initiative 2.1:** Build a culture of research and innovation
- Initiative 2.2:** Identify, communicate and enhance support for prominent academic programs
- Initiative 2.3:** Implement a “Great Place Initiative” that prioritizes attention to the diverse human element of the university
- Initiative 2.4:** Tell Kent State University’s compelling story through execution of a national strategic communications plan

## **PRIORITY 3: GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS**

Advance Kent State’s impact and reach as a leading international university

- Initiative 3.1:** Increase enrollment of international students and enhance their engagement in campus life
- Initiative 3.2:** Enhance the internationalization of the university through programmatic and partnership engagement

## **PRIORITY 4: REGIONAL IMPACT**

Serve as the innovative engine and engaged partner to meet community needs and enhance quality of life in the region and state

- Initiative 4.1:** Create a systemwide cross-sector educational partnership to strengthen the pre-kindergarten to postsecondary pipeline
- Initiative 4.2:** Enhance and advance, systemwide, university/community engagement efforts
- Initiative 4.3:** Expand and align strategic corporate partnerships systemwide.

## **PRIORITY 5: ORGANIZATIONAL STEWARDSHIP**

Ensure a culture of continuous improvement and the efficient stewardship of university resources and infrastructure

- Initiative 5.1:** Create a healthy campus initiative that prioritizes the health and wellness of students, faculty and staff
- Initiative 5.2:** Build alumni and philanthropic engagement commensurate with national peer institutions
- Initiative 5.3:** Establish a culture of sustainability and continuous improvement

# SELECTION OF PEER AND ASPIRATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

## SELECTED PEER INSTITUTIONS

Six peer institutions were selected because they share identified common key characteristics.

- **Georgia State University** – very impressive progress in student success measures
- **University of Houston** – similar in size and with goal of enhanced national distinction
- **Western Michigan University** – a Mid-American Conference university with similar demographic characteristics
- **Ohio University** – An Ohio university similar in size and academic quality
- **University of North Texas** – An institution similar to Kent State but with impressive upward trajectory in research over the last 10 years
- **Utah State University** – A university that is geographically diverse from Kent State but similar in academic quality and student success

## SELECTED ASPIRATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Five aspirational universities were selected to help guide the Strategic Roadmap planning and tracking process. Each university reflected a recent upward trajectory in national distinction.

- **Clemson University** – An example of how a university can focus on strengths and a narrower range of programs to achieve targeted excellence
- **Pennsylvania State University** – An example of how a system of campuses working as “one university” can bring the resources of a public research university to serve a large geographic footprint
- **University of South Florida** – An example of how a focused, ambitious and metric-driven strategic plan can propel a university to excellence
- **Temple University** – An example of how a regionally recognized university moves toward national prominence through effective communication
- **Virginia Commonwealth University** – An example of how a focus on university priorities and significant and sustained success in a major sport (men’s basketball) can help propel a university’s brand nationally.

## UNIVERSITY DASHBOARD

A University Dashboard of 16 measures was developed to track institutional progress toward meeting projected six-year goals. Each measure will be compared to the measures of selected peer institutions throughout a five-year timeline.

Those measures include:

- Undergraduate Enrollment
- Under-Represented Minorities as Percent of Undergraduate Enrollment
- Total International Enrollment
- Percent of Undergraduates Pell-Eligible
- New Freshmen Average ACT
- First-Year Retention Rate
- Six-Year Graduation Rate
- Bachelor’s Degrees Awarded
- Master’s Degrees Awarded
- Doctoral Degrees Awarded
- Tenure-Track Faculty as Percent of Total Full-Time Faculty
- Extramural Research Funding
- Endowment Assets
- University Investments
- Debt Burden Ratio
- Composite Financial Index (CFI).

## **STRATEGIC ROADMAP IMPLEMENTATION**

The Strategic Roadmap will be utilized to formulate operating plans for divisions, colleges and campuses throughout the eight-campus system. Overall responsibility for implementation of the strategic planning process rests with the president and provost with strategic oversight of the Board of Trustees. Specific implementation strategies will be developed in broad consultation with the faculty, deans and other university officers and staff as appropriate.

Further details regarding the planning process and measures of progress are located on the strategic visioning website ([www.kent.edu/strategicvisioning](http://www.kent.edu/strategicvisioning)).

