

FINAL REPORT TO THE PROVOST
Strategic Initiative #2
Promoting Well-Being, Finding Cures

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OVERVIEW AND PROLOGUE

The co-chairs and committee for Strategic Initiative #2, "Promoting Well-Being, Finding Cures," were charged with the fundamental topic of pursuing effective therapies and interventions that promote human well-being and correct/cure disorders. On 21 September 2011, the co-chairs and committee met and generated a Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats analysis for the topic. Key components of the initiative include the consideration of all forms of well-being across the human lifespan and the integration of basic and applied research into a more unified translational and interdisciplinary approach that is keyed to specific problems within this realm of inquiry.

The generation of the analysis took place in a semi-structured format, with committee members asked to contribute to each of the components of the analysis in turn. At the end, the lists were amended and reorganized to some degree through informal discussion. The original list of comments (in raw form, as generated at the meeting) is appended to this document; the analysis described below represents the comments of the committee, with some organization added to shape the analysis toward a coherent narrative.

The document was shared with the university community in mid-November of 2011, and the document provided a focus for discussion and input during the Summit held for this initiative on 2 December 2011 in the Spooner Hall Commons. Based on input received and comments made by faculty attending that Summit, the original document was edited in late 2011 and early 2012 to reflect those discussions. It is worth noting at the outset of this document that comments from the December Summit served largely to amplify or highlight the points made in the original document, rather than provide new information or proposals with respect to this theme. As such, we have integrated these statements within the structure of the previous document to produce this final report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The University of Kansas possesses strengths in research on promoting human health and well-being and in the types of research that will yield solutions that translate to the development of interventions or treatments for human health. Among the relevant strengths are the presence of a number of faculty whose research fit these foci, and the presence of interdisciplinary research centers that seek to serve this goal. A consensus of input from the chairs, the committee and faculty attending the summit suggests that attaining the goals of the initiative at KU will require four developments:

- the development of functional interdisciplinary teams who focus on specific problems in health and human development,
- the securing of external funding to sustain long-term research efforts in this domain,
- the development of infrastructure that facilitates interdisciplinary collaboration, and
- a renewed focus on the research mission of the university

The mechanisms recommended by the committee and faculty to address these goals include the following:

Development of functional interdisciplinary teams focused on health and well-being

Such teams may be composed of extant faculty, but the recruitment of new faculty will be the most critical to the success of the initiative. Our recommendations include the following:

- priorities in faculty hiring should be harmonized with the goals of the initiative
- faculty should be recruited based on the importance and impact of the problems they research, rather than on disciplinary characteristics
- efforts should be made to increase faculty who are affiliated or appointed within interdisciplinary-oriented centers and units

Securing of external funding for research on health and well-being

As an institution, KU cannot expect to fund this type of research internally; fortunately, analyses of federal and private funding agencies shows that the priorities of these external entities are well-aligned with this initiative. Thus, the KU should:

- make the generation of external funding a primary consideration in hiring and retention of new faculty
- use the presence of external funding and the impact/significance of faculty research as critical factors in merit, tenure, and promotion decisions
- pursue split appointments of new faculty with research centers (where the pursuit of external funding is an explicit criterion for success) as a means to increase accountability for pursuit of external funding
- continue to support existing and, where appropriate, new centers that serve the initiative, and promote the development of applications for federal funding that would establish or sustain such centers
- identify and enforce external funding as a consideration in the allocation of research space across the institution

Development of infrastructure to facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration on health and well-being

Generally speaking, committee and faculty input suggested that the current administrative and academic structures of KU were organized largely to support traditional disciplinary boundaries, rather than to promote work that transcended these boundaries. The following recommendations emerged from this document:

- Existing research centers have contributed in critical ways to the interdisciplinary work currently at KU to date, and should play a central role in the pursuit of the goals of this initiative
- Maintenance and repair of existing physical research infrastructure (e.g., physical integrity of buildings, presence of adequate wiring for high-speed or high-yield computing) should not be delayed/deferred any longer
- Develop mechanisms and tools for communication across departmental/disciplinary/school boundaries with the goal of increasing interdisciplinary collaboration

Renewed focus on the research mission of the university generally, and specifically on the goals of this initiative

Considerable sentiment emerged, from both the planning committee and some Summit faculty input, on the importance of renewed promotion and support of the research mission of the university in general, and on the promotion of this specific initiative as an important strength of KU. Among the recommendations to emerge:

- Increase the number and frequency of significant awards for research excellence and/or achievement
- Acknowledge, support, and reward the contributions of non-faculty research staff and their role in the research mission of the university
- Acknowledge and facilitate recognition of interdisciplinary/interdepartmental contributions to the research mission of faculty in merit, tenure, and promotion decisions
- Promote KU's standing and perception as a Research I (or research-first) university, particularly in the realm of health and well-being
- De-emphasize hiring based primarily on curricular needs or disciplinary coverage; over-reliance on hiring to meet teaching needs was perceived to be a major hindrance to the recruitment of cutting-edge, interdisciplinary researchers
- Evaluate the use of differential workload allocation (i.e., deviations from the traditional 40-40-20) for new or replacement faculty lines, toward expectations for greater research productivity.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE #2
Finding Cures, Promoting Well-Being
A Synthesis of Committee Analysis and Summit Input
KU's Current Strengths within this Initiative

As generated by the committee, the strengths of the University of Kansas regarding this initiative focused on four fairly distinct factors.

Strength of existing faculty at the University Of Kansas in pursuit of this initiative

It was noted that many of the faculty at the University of Kansas (KU) in this area have highly visible national or international profiles, and that accomplished research programs have been noted in all four of the “bold exemplars” associated with this theme on the Provost’s website. This included expertise in drug discovery and development, typical and atypical development, human health, and aging. In addition, there exist KU-based centers that are playing leading national roles in NIH-supported research areas (e.g., drug discovery, intellectual/developmental disabilities). This point was echoed by comments made during the Summit, with references made to the depth and quality of extant research, and the presence of faculty with national visibility and recognition across KU’s campuses.

Tradition of integrative and translational research in some areas at KU

In addition to the strength of individual faculty, it was noted that KU already has an established commitment to theoretical and applied research, and features an emphasis on integrative, interdisciplinary research in many areas. Reference to this strength was also implicit in many of the comments and flip-chart entries from the Summit.

Extant infrastructure for translational and interdisciplinary research at KU

The research that will be necessary to pursue in advancing this initiative will be largely interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary in nature. Committee members noted that interdisciplinary research and tradition are strongly encouraged in some areas on campus (behavioral and social sciences were noted specifically), as reflected by the willingness to make joint appointments between departments and between research centers and departments. Numerous productive collaborations between KU faculty and researchers beyond KU were mentioned. Finally, a substantial infrastructure for the preparation and administration of interdisciplinary grant efforts was also noted, particularly through two centers that specialize in interdisciplinary work, the Schiefelbusch Life Span Institute and the Higuchi Biosciences Center (although such infrastructure was not perceived to be sufficiently distributed through the institution as a whole; see weaknesses below). Finally, it was noted that KU possessed substantial technical expertise at many levels of measurement (e.g., spectrometry, electrophysiology, biobehavioral, and psychometric assessment) that are necessary to support such interdisciplinary research. Input from the Summit strongly resonated to this point. Faculty who attended the summit noted the influence of the presence of various research centers at KU in attaining the goals of this initiative, noting that center structures were already strongly contributing to the quality of ongoing research, promoting collaboration among faculty and researchers. Attendees

suggested specifically that the established centers represented “models or resources” for the attainment of the goals of this initiative.

General positive characteristics of KU

KU has a set of general characteristics that the committee felt was advantageous in pursuit of this goal. One was the perception of collegiality among faculty and between faculty and administration at KU. Another was the tendency for faculty to bring their research into teaching. The last strength identified was the general sense that there was a clear intent to improve the institution through the strategic initiative process.

Current Perceived Weaknesses at KU with respect to this Initiative

While the committee readily identified strengths of KU with respect to this initiative, they also readily identified weaknesses that currently serve as barriers or deficiencies to the goal of pursuing a research agenda in this domain. The weaknesses generated by the committee can be distilled into five somewhat related factors; these did not emerge from the committee discussion as individually distinct as the strengths identified above. While some of these factors are interrelated, they are nuanced and subtly different from each other such that pooling them would lose some resolution or granularity in the discussion; in addition, some of the subtle distinctions among them may be seen as carrying implications for different interventions for corrective action.

Lack of critical mass at KU in certain areas on the cutting edges of science

The committee perceived that KU has been slow to embrace hiring of faculty in emergent and promising areas of specialization. Comments from a number of faculty who attended the Summit for this Initiative suggested that this hesitation may be a function of the institution being risk-averse. In any event, as a result of this hesitancy, KU has missed a number of opportunities to position itself advantageously within innovative or newly-developing niches in translational science. Specific examples raised were in target identification for drug discovery, the neurosciences (particularly systems neuroscience, which seeks to integrate neural processes with behavioral outcomes), and the emergent field of epigenetics. It was also noted that many of the perceived and promoted scientific strengths of KU tend to be historical, rather than current. Furthermore, the actual strengths of KU tend to be clustered within the productivity of a handful of individuals (e.g., nearly 90% of external funding is generated by about 10% of the faculty), which make those strengths tenuous and vulnerable. It was noted that the involvement of the arts and humanities in the roles of translational (health/well-being) work at KU tends to be underutilized; this may reflect a lack of forward thinking about the cutting edge of those disciplines with respect to this initiative, as well as a lack of investigators in these areas who are interested in addressing translational research in health/well-being.

While KU was characterized as being strong in health/well-being approaches at the level of the individual, structural-environmental-economic approaches to health and well-being were not particularly well-represented on the faculty. Finally, it was noted that many faculty who might retool or become re-engaged to fill interdisciplinary or emergent research niches have not done so (the probability of success in this realm was a matter of some discussion). Comments

made during the Summit with the entire faculty tended to reinforce the committee's perceptions, largely in implicit ways. For example, groups indicated the need to create an institutional climate that was less risk-averse; the need for key senior hires with established track records of external funding; more frequent use of joint appointments; linking criteria for promotion and tenure explicitly to the initiative (e.g., making expectations for research productivity more stringent, giving priority to collaboration and/or interdisciplinary work); and the need to devote resources in a way that would move make KU competitive nationally and move the agenda for this initiative forward.

Impediments to hiring interdisciplinary or cutting-edge faculty at KU

One weakness discussed among the committee involved impediments to the hiring of productive researchers who are able to compete nationally or internationally within the realm of their research. First, allowing virtually all faculty hiring and promotion to occur through traditional academic departments may impede the progress of the institution in pursuit of the goals of this particular initiative. Hiring within departments is often based on curricular needs, on disciplinary constraints or the desire to represent a particular discipline, or to serve the interests of specific extant programs within those departments. All of these are potential impediments to the hiring of individuals for cutting-edge research programs that stretch beyond disciplinary boundaries and would substantially contribute to progress in this initiative. Achieving the goals of this initiative at KU will necessarily depend on interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary efforts and the hiring of faculty at that cutting edge. These hires tend not to be made within traditional departmental structures, and may require hiring with appointments across different schools, or may require increased reliance on split appointments with extant KU research centers. Indeed, many of the discussions and much of the input raised at the Summit focused on the function and importance of KU's interdisciplinary centers and RGS efforts in commercializing research as resources in attaining the goals for this initiative, thus bolstering the committee's concerns within this realm.

Inadequate priority for/promotion of KU's research mission

Committee members expressed opinion that, over the past two decades, KU seems to have emphasized and promoted its teaching mission (specifically, its undergraduate teaching mission) in some ways to the detriment of its research mission. Committee members perceived that KU has not placed enough emphasis on, or reward for, accomplishment within the research mission, and that research productivity (and specifically the proclivity for seeking and procuring external funding, where appropriate or necessary) is not considered as part of hiring or promotion/tenure decisions. In part, the committee expressed concern that faculty research (particularly faculty successes and accomplishments in research) is often not broadly promoted publicly on campus or beyond it, and is insufficiently celebrated and rewarded. Some members of the committee thought that this made KU vulnerable to having research-productive faculty "raided" or "poached" by other institutions that might be perceived to value research to a greater degree. It was also suggested that, in a number of areas/disciplines within the university, the role of research in the university is not always well-understood. This point was echoed in several of the conclusions generated by the breakout groups at the Summit. Among the points made by faculty at the Summit were: the commercialization of research should be viewed as a

positive step for the academic community; non-faculty research staff should be recognized and rewarded more; and many of the existing physical facilities and resources at KU are not adequate for the conduct of cutting-edge research, and are not built for the promotion of interdisciplinary collaboration or productivity. Faculty noted the lack of time to conduct research, the lack of adequate space devoted to research, and existing incentive structures that do not reward collaborative or interdisciplinary work. In particular, it was noted that interdepartmental appointments (which are sought to increase interdisciplinary work on campus) can result in disparities in terms of merit allocations, and in the execution of promotion and tenure decisions. Others suggested that the story of KU's excellence in translational research could be better told and promoted within and beyond the state.

The challenges associated with enacting changes to KU's research mission were noted in a number of spirited discussions during Summit sessions. In particular, a number of attendees expressed concern that an increased emphasis on research commercialization would exclude particular disciplines or would impinge on more traditional academic pursuits, such as the conduct of more basic, fundamental scholarship. Others advocated the consideration of global contexts, ethical dimensions, and societal needs when evaluating which initiatives to pursue.

Institutional culture/barriers with respect to interdisciplinary research

Despite the perception that KU has fostered interdisciplinary and integrative/translational research in some sectors (see the section on strengths, above), it was also noted that such facilitation was not broadly distributed across the institution. Committee members noted that there is no reward or incentive structure for interdisciplinary research or faculty entrepreneurship with respect to research within the scope of this initiative. Indeed, some stated that the promotion/tenure process and in merit salary allocations in some domains of the institution actually discourages such endeavors. Some committee members suggested that integrative or translational work on the kinds of problems associated with this initiative is not as recognized or valued as basic research across all areas of the university. Finally, it was acknowledged that research in the human domain will often require collaboration between KU-Lawrence and KUMC, but that substantial administrative, information technology, and cultural barriers exist as impediments to success in this realm. This point was heartily endorsed during the Summit, with three breakout groups highlighting this as the most important issue to address in improving KU's progress toward achieving the goals of this initiative.

Lack of communication between potential scientific partners within the university

In its initial analysis, the committee implied that success of research relevant to this initiative will depend on the facilitation of meaningful interactions between disciplines on this campus. However, broadly speaking, it was felt that there are not good mechanisms at KU for communication between (even more closely-related) disciplines that are separated by academic structures such as departments or schools (one prominent example highlighted involved molecular biosciences and pharmacy). The perpetuation of disciplinary "silos" often results in missed opportunities to make connections between areas of strength within the institution, and also relates to the tendency for units to hire with disciplinary (rather than inter- or multidisciplinary) goals in mind. The lack of a clearinghouse for promoting collaborative jobs or

projects (similar to relational databases operated by Harvard and Stanford for their faculty) was seen as a weakness. Like the previous point, this one was received well by faculty attending the Summit, highlighted by three different breakout groups in their post-discussion commentary.

Lack of fundamental research infrastructure and facilities

Finally, committee members felt that the physical infrastructure to support research was inadequate in many areas on the Lawrence campus. Research infrastructure, particularly in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS), was singled out (faculty members recounted the need to bring in generators to address power outages in buildings where research materials needed to remain frozen). Indeed, it was stated that research infrastructure in buildings housing CLAS investigators is reaching a point of crisis, and that the contrast with other new facilities on West Campus is detrimental to morale and to the development of an interdisciplinary climate. The lack of coherent planning and vision for infrastructure was also noted. Committee members identified inadequacies in key technologies in support facilities (e.g., NextGen DNA sequencing), as well as in human capital; several individuals pointed to uneven support of non-tenure-track researchers who work and support laboratories in various domains. Finally, the general dearth of institutional funds for pilot studies in support of the pursuit of competitive external proposals was noted (in *all* areas of inquiry), as well as the general unavailability of bridge funds for investigators who find themselves at presumably transient gaps in external funding. Finally, it was noted that KU lacks coherent institutional policy or vision with respect to its pursuit of patents; this will be increasingly important to the institution as research within this initiative advances. This last point was also uniformly confirmed in discussions during the Summit, being mentioned explicitly by two breakout groups.

External Opportunities for KU with respect to this Initiative

The discussion of opportunities external to KU for pursuit of this theme generated a series of five positive conditions that might well facilitate success in this initiative.

Widespread public support for the initiative

It was perceived that there was considerable support for the goals of this initiative at every geographic level (i.e., local, regional, national, and global). There is increasing interest among the populace in personal health, well-being, and longevity, and this was viewed as highly advantageous for the success of the initiative. It was noted that this might well allow KU to frame the message and market it within the State of Kansas, which might provide an edge to those who are particularly eager for this type of information.

Entrepreneurial opportunities inherent in the initiative

The initiative to develop cures or promote well-being has the potential to generate many economic and entrepreneurial endeavors, involving partnerships with industry, and direct marketing of research-related products. This is particularly true in many specific examples, including the void produced by the recent abdication of the pharmaceutical industry for much of its own basic research. It was suggested that this emphasis would allow for the effects or

impact of research to be calculated in terms of economic metrics. Leveraging University learning for economic development is likely to find widespread bipartisan support in Kansas much as it has nationally.

Existing local and global conditions poised to facilitate the initiative

The existence of new communication channels (e.g., social media) were seen as having great potential for bettering collaboration of KU scientists with other scientists and with the populations that they study. Increased presence of KU within the state may well facilitate access to populations necessary for research to advance this initiative. Furthermore, it was perceived that the need for research related to this initiative will only increase for the foreseeable future.

Availability of external funding to pursue and sustain the initiative

With increased recognition of health disparities, and the emphasis on generative science to advance medical, behavioral, or social interventions and treatments, numerous federal funding structures support the goals of this particular theme. This is exemplified by the December 2011 establishment of a new institute for translational science by the NIH. Likewise, industry and foundation funding groups are similarly dedicated to the goals of this theme.

Availability of expertise to allow KU to pursue the initiative

Finally, it was noted that expertise to facilitate KU's pursuit of this initiative exists around the US, and that under the right conditions, KU may be in a position to attract this expertise. Mechanisms exist to analyze existing structures and make key hires to bridge historically separate areas that might be synthesized to address critical problems in this domain of science. However, the prospect for success in this regard is tightly tied to the effective support of the initiatives described herein.

External Threats to KU's Success within this Initiative

The final aspect of the committee's analysis involves the identification of threats external to the institution in pursuit of this initiative. A number of threats enumerated by the committee could be reduced to three basic categories.

Public lack of understanding of role of research

It was widely acknowledged that the public does not always fully appreciate the role of empirical inquiry in the consideration of societal and individual problems. In particular, the contribution of basic research to more integrated, problem-oriented approaches (such as represented by this initiative) is not broadly understood by the public, and that this represents an educational challenge to KU.

Competition from other institutions

Some of the motivations for pursuing this initiative, such as clear societal relevance, prioritization by diverse funding agencies, and the potential for positive economic impact locally

and beyond, apply throughout the world. Accordingly, nearly all major US institutions are gearing up to compete in this area, meaning that competition for increasingly limited resources to pursue this initiative will be fierce. This is true both with respect to federal funding but also to private funds and research alignments with the private sector and foundations. Moreover, many of our competitor AAU institutions have already made substantial investments in the areas associated with this initiative, meaning that in many cases KU will be seeking to catch up to more established programs.

This is perhaps most acutely felt in the realm of key staffing. Other institutions, many of whom are better-funded than KU, will do what they can to attract productive and cutting-edge faculty away of this institution. The relatively small population (and tax base) of the state of Kansas make KU vulnerable to being “outgunned” by other institutions in the quest for the best faculty. Moreover, such institutions are often in a better position to provide much-needed seed money to establish and support infrastructure in advance of competitions for external funding.

Effect of current economic and social climate on KU’s ability to sustain the initiative

Whereas external funding is clearly available for pursuit of this initiative, the sources of that funding in the current economic climate are exceedingly vulnerable. Federal, state, and private funding for basic and applied research is increasingly susceptible to cuts or elimination. In addition, societal conditions (issues of privacy and confidentiality, less publicly available information) have made access to important research populations more difficult in the last several decades. Finally, scientists generally have little expertise in calculating the economic effects of their research; the degree to which this is increasingly important in facilitating this initiative will put us at a proportional disadvantage.

Public perception of KU’s mission and the choice of priorities

A last threat involves the focus of KU’s priorities. It was suggested that, too often within the State of Kansas, KU has sought to be “everything to everyone.” It was generally acknowledged during the Summit that this comprehensive strategy cannot be sustained in the current economic and social climate, and that KU likely will face hard choices in choosing promising directions for enhancing strengths in the future, and that such choices may have political consequences within and beyond the institution.

Mechanisms to Achieve the Goals of Strategic Initiative #2

A final addition to this document is a listing of actions that the KU might utilize in attaining the goals enumerated within this strategic initiative.

Harmonize Faculty Hiring with the Themes of the Initiative

Although there is expertise on the KU campus with respect to research associated with this initiative, many of the most productive scientists in this area are mid-career or senior investigators. Furthermore, only a handful of extant faculty are truly engaged in nationally-visible and nationally-competitive interdisciplinary research efforts. Therefore, future hiring will

be a key component of achieving the goals of this initiative. Three separate strategies may be necessary to facilitate this success:

Split Appointments with Research Centers. The positive influence of KU's extant research centers permeated both the committee discussions and the faculty commentary during the Summit for this strategic initiative. The centers' emphasis on research productivity and on the generation of high-impact research that can attract and be sustained through external funding is also consistent with the availability of federal and private funds to pursue these goals. Furthermore, the independence of these centers from specific academic disciplines makes them ideal incubators for work that is collaborative and extends beyond disciplinary boundaries. Hiring new faculty with appointments split between departments and research will work to encourage faculty to transcend disciplinary boundaries and to focus on research programs consistent with this initiative, although increasing such appointments will require a consideration of the demands of such appointments and current practices with respect to merit, promotion, and tenure decisions at KU. This strategy may be used with any hire where such outcomes are desired.

Key Senior/Mid-Career Hires in Critical Interdisciplinary Areas. KU has long sought to fill out faculty ranks through the recruitment of assistant professors. Strategic, targeted hires have occurred only in specific exceptional cases. For some proportion of future hires, it may be advisable to target more senior investigators who could bring mature research programs with a history of external funding, as well as established research teams, who could serve as a focus or catalyst for involvement of other faculty already at KU in new research efforts. The use of new quantitative tools (e.g., network analyses) that have promise for visualization and analysis of institutional assets and faculty may assist in identifying exactly where such hires may be optimally placed. This strategy may be best used when KU has some expertise in an emergent field but where such expertise is concentrated in the junior ranks (for example, as is the case with systems-level neuroscience).

Cluster Hires in areas new to KU. Some promising areas of inquiry are currently underdeveloped in the US and thus represent areas of opportunity. In such areas, where KU does not currently have any nexus of expertise, a cluster-hiring strategy over the course of a relatively short period of time (e.g., 2-3 years) may be most profitable. This strategy would represent a rapid and agile response to the market in a specific area, and effectively creates a focus for KU where there was not one previously. Among the examples of such a focus (mentioned in two of the Summit talks) was epigenetics, a research tradition that the NIH has identified as a priority area for funding in the next decade, but which has yet to be developed as a research focus in the US.

Develop Mechanisms for Communication beyond Disciplinary-Based Units

A common theme through both the committee analysis and the comments gleaned from the Summit involved the difficulties expressed by faculty in attempts to find colleagues for potential interdisciplinary collaboration. In the service of progress toward the goals of this initiative, the establishment of a searchable database or clearinghouse for faculty interests that

could be accessed by other faculty within (or even beyond) KU might represent a low-cost step to address this problem.

Prioritize Research Infrastructure for Collaborative and Health-Related Research

KU has deferred maintenance on physical facilities that are critical to research; this cannot continue if the institution seeks to develop a world-class focus on research in health and well-being. In addition, in spite of considerable environmental research which suggests that the kind of productivity and collaboration necessary for progress on this interdisciplinary initiative is facilitated by regular and informal contact, new facilities tend to be designed to maintain proximity of individuals within the same discipline. Finally, institutional investments in formal mechanisms for major proposal planning and support would also be desirable.

Facilitate Collaboration across Lawrence and Medical Center Campuses

The conduct of research critical to world-class progress within this initiative (e.g., work with clinical populations, or the conduct of clinical trials) over the next decade will necessarily rely on collaborations across the two main KU campuses. The removal of the considerable extant administrative barriers to such collaboration will greatly facilitate the attainment of such research.

Establish a Review Panel to Evaluate/Generate Hiring and Infrastructure Proposals within the Initiative

The implementation of the recommendations coming from this committee and the Summit will be the most critical endeavor for this initiative, and given the nature of the changes recommended here, and the hard choices that will need to be made (as noted on p. 11, it is unlikely that KU can afford to excel in every area of this initiative) an advisory panel to evaluate proposals for hiring and infrastructure change should be established. Ideally, the panel should function at a level that transcends extant disciplinary structure. The perception of a “business-as-usual” approach will likely undermine the good will of faculty who have devoted time and effort to this initiative, and deplete enthusiasm for the goals expressed for it as well.

Summary and Outlook

The selection of this initiative indicates both the existence of many strengths related to the problems of promoting well-being and finding cures at the University of Kansas and the relevance of these areas nationally. Finding cures and promoting well-being will require multiple approaches that promote existing strengths at KU and the allocation of new resources. A multi-level approach is necessary to address human health and development, and this will require the contribution of many different disciplines. Some of these disciplines are already allied, but truly creative solutions will come from crossing the traditional disciplinary lines of academia, such as aligning researchers in the behavioral/social sciences with those in the biological sciences, chemistry, pharmacy, or engineering.

Due to the efforts of many faculty and the support of KU administration, we are well positioned to build upon what has already been done and to increase the visibility and influence

of the university in these areas – while at the same time making a real difference in the lives of Kansans and people everywhere. However, much of the analysis and the Summit discussion concerned the challenges of working in areas that demand team- and interdisciplinary approaches in the modern research world. In many ways we lag behind key competitors both in addressing these challenges and in apportioning resources to key areas of interest. An important outcome of the Bold Initiatives process will be to set institutional priorities based both on our aspirations and on our most promising capabilities, and then to pursue these with alacrity and vigor.