

**ADVANCEMENT SECTION**



**REPORT OF A COMPREHENSIVE  
EVALUATION VISIT**

TO

**University of Kansas  
Lawrence, Kansas**

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FOR

**The Higher Learning Commission**  
A Commission of the  
North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

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## ADVANCEMENT SECTION

### I. OVERALL OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

In the decade since the last NCA comprehensive visit, the University of Kansas has made commendable progress in positioning itself to improve the overall quality of its educational programs and services. In addition, all administrative and academic activities on the Lawrence campus have been placed under the leadership of the provost/executive vice chancellor. Among the university's strengths are a dedicated faculty and staff; a supportive Board of Regents; exemplary administrative leadership; and students, alumni and community residents who appreciate the value of the university. Working with the state legislature, regents, students and donors, KU has achieved an important level of regulatory relief, increased private fundraising and implemented a creative tuition enhancement program.

### II. CONSULTATIONS OF THE TEAM

**A. Selective Admissions.** Consistent with admissions requirements of AAU member institutions, KU should consider a phased approach to implementing a more selective admissions policy. Development of the policy should acknowledge the centrality of student success. Policy models designed to ensure a good fit between students' characteristics and aspirations and institutional strengths and capacities should be explored. Special attention should be given to meeting the needs of underrepresented populations with predicted success at KU.

**B. International/Global Awareness.** As the Global Awareness Program and other undergraduate and graduate international experiences grow to include all KU students, the university needs to make appropriate budgetary and curricular provisions to accommodate the increased demands.

Information about the rich service and outreach offerings needs to be disseminated through a variety of outlets in order to promote throughout the state the part of the university's mission that states that "*KU serves Kansans*".

Further definition of the meaning of global awareness and internationalization specific to KU will be necessary as the institution progresses in achieving this aspect of its mission in teaching and learning, research and service.

The recently planned Integrated Marketing Strategy can utilize the great volume of service outreach activities to promote the institution. A complete inventory of activities at any one time seems daunting; however, promoting the diversity and depth of the university's outreach endeavors should prove to be an asset in this effort.

**C.** We applaud the appointment of an Executive Vice Chancellor for External Affairs and the development of an integrated marketing plan to communicate with multiple audiences. Such communication can reinforce the "one university" emphasis.

It is important that communications are designed for the audiences that are their targets. The audience should include alumni and the larger higher education community as well as potential students, legislators, prospective donors and taxpayers.

The audience should also include internal constituents. The National Survey of Student Engagement DEEP project indicated that some members of the KU community perceived “silos made of concrete” which makes it difficult to cross existing institutional boundaries. Members of the NCA Steering Committee and students at the student forum reported their pleasant surprise at learning through the self-study process about some of the activities underway and the accomplishments of others at KU. This suggests that internal communications are not as strong as they should be.

- D. Assessment.** The objectives of a quality and successful general undergraduate education have been consistently and carefully honed over the years. The accomplishment of these resulting six goals of a Kansas University general education are assessed regularly through surveys and interviews that pay attention to important methodological issues such as sampling and interview protocol. These are clearly steps in the right direction and it is hoped that as the assessment process evolves it will be further augmented with additional tools such as student portfolios.

In contrast, the assessment of graduate programs is in its infancy, made possible in recent years by the greater centralization of programs in the graduate school. While the graduate school has a good sense of the data required for the assessment of quality education in the graduate programs, careful attention will be needed in the compilation, reporting and feedback to relevant units of the data obtained. KU’s desire to increase its stature as a major research institution requires these important data to help it strengthen its requirement and retention of quality graduate students.

- E.** Given the uncertainty of federal funding of programs designed to enhance the enrollment, persistence and graduation of underrepresented minorities and first generation populations, the University of Kansas, like other universities, should consider a long-term strategy for reducing reliance on such funding.
- F. Regulatory Relief.** As is the case with many public universities, the University of Kansas has seen substantial reductions in state funding. Recognizing that state funding will continue to be limited, the University has sought and received relief from a number of state regulatory requirements. These include a five-year tuition enhancement program that permits the University to retain all tuition revenues. This five-year plan will provide \$43 million of additional revenue. The University needs to continue this program and have the authority to set and retain tuition revenue if it is to meet its instruction and research needs in the future.

The University should have future flexibility to manage and retain its financial resources. Its request to retain interest earning and all its funding would provide increased financial support and flexibility. This coupled with increased private fund raising; increased sponsored funding and differential tuition will enhance the universities resources. The University also needs to be able to adjust its admission standards to gain recognition as Kansas’s premier university.

The KU Medical Center has achieved significant progress by restructuring. The hospital became a separate corporation in 1998. The Medical Center has established a research foundation which now has the responsibility for managing sponsored funding. This has provided more budget and management flexibility as well as increasing revenues.

Although the tuition enhancement program has provided some financial assistance, additional state support will be needed to meet the health care needs of the region and

continue to build the excellence that has been developed in its research programs. The Medical Center needs to continue implementation of its master plan to provide the facilities that will be needed in the future.

One of KU's regulatory relief objectives is to have more flexibility in attracting and retaining its classified staff. It has requested authority to transfer administrative responsibility from the state personnel system to the University. We encourage the University in this effort to more effectively manage its human resources, and to recognize and reward performance in support of its institutional mission.

- G. Infrastructure Issues.** The University has addressed a significant portion of its deferred maintenance during the past decade. The Crumbling Classrooms legislative initiative has provided funds for improvement through a bond issue resulting in \$67 million in improvements. The University receives funds through a state tax mil levy that contributed to improving the condition of more than 60 buildings. However this has not adequately addressed all of the campus facility needs. The University's efforts to increase state support and raise the state tax mil levy should be encouraged. Over 40% of the campus buildings are more than 40 years old. With the need to address more than \$200 million in deferred maintenance the campus should continue to focus on repair, renovation, and replacement of obsolete facilities. The campus master planning process is an effective vehicle for identifying these needs. The University should be commended for the \$18.3 million in energy conservation improvements that have been implemented since 2002.

The campus has made significant progress with its information technology programs. It has merged information technology activities with those of the Library. It has developed a portal for access to a wide variety of campus information. The University has one of the more successful People Soft implementations. There is a need to develop a plan to provide for regular upgrading of its technology equipment and to allocate funding for the continuing costs of the People Soft application as it matures.

### **III. RECOGNITION OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS, PROGRESS, AND/OR PRACTICES**

#### **A. Excellent and Sustained Leadership**

- **Chancellor**  
The chancellor has articulated a clear vision for the campus and has been willing to seek and lead to achieve the changes that are needed at KU. His ability to work with donors, Regents, legislators and others has created lasting change. His global vision is reflected through the international engagement of the campus and he has exercised leadership in the area of effective planning.
- **Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost**  
The Vice Chancellor/Provost on the Lawrence campus has been the force behind the changes to campus structure and improvements. He has worked effectively with faculty and student governance and has been willing to make hard decisions. He has assembled an effective team and empowered them to move forward. His national leadership on library materials access is laudable.
- **The Kansas University Medical Center Executive Vice Chancellor and Executive Dean** has effectively led and implemented the planning efforts of the Medical Center. Her leadership has led to the improved climate and research/education focus.

- The appointment of the Executive Vice-Chancellor for External Relations positions KU to tell its story more dramatically and to communicate more effectively with its many constituencies.
- B. Process Improvement
- Changes in administrative structures
  - Successful PeopleSoft implementation
  - Research Office with effective coordination of faculty support, infrastructure, core facilities and centers
  - Allocation of Tuition Enhancement to key programs
  - Innovations in Student Services
- C. Research Gains
- Creation of interdisciplinary centers and multi-campus projects
  - External funding growth, doubling since 1995.
- D. Student Outcomes and Engagement
- Results of the National Survey of Student Engagement DEEP study
  - Increased international, learning community and undergraduate research opportunities
- E. Collegiality
- Internal collegiality including 20% student representation on committees, involvement of staff and non-tenure track faculty
  - External community relations and outreach
  - Excellent partnership with the Haskell Indian Nations University
  - Health care outreach across Kansas