

The Case for Kansas State University in Australia

Introduction

K-State 2025 provides a strong case that we need to pursue additional international opportunities and collaborations between our faculty, staff, and students and colleagues from abroad. These collaborations need to be focused around several key areas of the world, and need to encompass both research opportunities and study abroad opportunities. I believe our international presence must be more than study abroad opportunities for undergraduate students. Additionally, future collaborations must build on our existing research strengths where Kansas State University has an international reputation.

Clearly, to be a Top 50 public research university we need to develop partnerships with many different institutions. However, many of the traditionally recognized premier research universities in Europe already have agreements with top tier public research universities in the U.S., and as such, may not wish to add new strategic partnerships. Thus we need to look at other areas of the world outside of Europe.

If Kansas State is to be opportunistic in new partnerships, we need to find universities that are "up and coming" internationally, have a strong research focus, and can benefit strongly from collaborations with a Midwestern land grant university.

I would propose that Kansas State University focus our efforts on developing increased relationships with the higher education community in Australia. To facilitate these relationships, we will need to open up our third international office -- joining those already located in India and China -- in Sydney, Australia.

Why Australia?

There are four major reasons why Australia represents an excellent opportunity for Kansas State University. First, many of our students have not travelled extensively, and the Australian language barrier is relatively easy to overcome, making Australia an excellent choice for a first international experience. Second, Australia trades extensively with other countries in southeast Asia, and as such represents a gateway to further collaborations in this growing area of the world (Vietnam, Malaysia, China, and Korea). Third, agriculture is a key part of the Australian economy, which fits well with many of the nationally recognized strength areas of Kansas State University. Finally, there are significant research collaborations possible within the animal health corridor and Australian industry, which can result in longer term economic development opportunities.

Research Collaborations - Building on Our Strengths

Kansas State University has been involved in collaborations with colleagues in Australia focused around plant infectious diseases for several years. These ongoing collaborations have resulted in the inclusion of Kansas State University in a major interdisciplinary proposal -- the Cooperative Research Centres -- <https://www.crc.gov.au/Information/default.aspx>, which if funded will result in eight years of support to foster increased research opportunities. The Biosecurity Research Institute is a facility that allows for the study of different select agents in agricultural crops and makes it possible for Kansas State to undertake research which is simply not possible in Australia due to government regulation. Thus, by making use of a unique facility, we can collaborate with the Australian research community in a way possible at only a few other major research universities.

Undergraduate Study Abroad Opportunities

A relatively small percentage of the Kansas State undergraduate community travels abroad. In order to significantly increase the number of undergraduate students who travel and study outside of the U.S., we need a place where significant numbers of our students can go, which will be different culturally but will result in a positive experience. These study abroad opportunities could include study for an entire semester at an Australian university, a one- or two-week immersion experience, or an industrial internship with an Australian company.

Graduate Student Exchange

There was significant interest from several universities in joint doctoral programs with components of the program offered at Kansas State University and a similar research university in Australia. These types of initiatives might include joint advising for doctoral work, working in an Australian university for a semester or year, or seminar exchange between universities. In order to pursue these types of graduate student opportunities, Kansas State will need to be flexible in how we approach graduate education.

Potential Australian Partner Universities

Many universities in Australia would represent good partner institutions, but initial efforts should focus on the "Group of 8" universities that are the most academically prestigious institutions in Australia. These include:

Australian National University
Monash University
University of Adelaide
University of Melbourne
University of New South Wales
University of Queensland (*)
University of Sydney (*)
University of Western Australia (*)

The universities with a (*) have already been visited by Kansas State University, and have expressed an interest in discussing further collaborative opportunities.