UNIVERSITY STRATEGIC ENROLLMENT TASK FORCE

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS
May 2016
INTRODUCTION

Committee charge:
To develop annual enrollment goals targeting modest growth of 1-2 percent per year.

The University Strategic Enrollment Task Force has compiled a list of guiding principles for university leaders to consider in the development of a strategic enrollment plan as they determine growth strategy, which are presented in four areas: new markets, undergraduate enrollment, graduate enrollment, and financial considerations. Our recommendations are intended to serve as a framework, or guide, to assist in the development of plans specific to each area. We urge our colleagues to utilize this framework, in accordance with the desired priorities and goals [outlined in the K-State 2025 plan] of K-State’s future, when determining overall enrollment strategies.

It is the opinion of this committee that bold action is warranted to achieve results necessary to support future university initiatives — the consequences of a too-conservative approach at this time are dire. We propose a more data-driven approach to future enrollment endeavors with careful analysis of alternative scenarios of potential return on investment.

This new approach will allow K-State to honor its land-grant mission, along with its history of quality and excellence, by sharing it with bold new markets in addition to our in-state students. Moreover, it will boost ongoing efforts in the areas of research and graduate programs.

It is imperative that this university continue to grow and experience healthy enrollment. Going forward, a fundamental tenet of that growth must be a reasonable formula of resource allocation that rewards successful delivery of programs that take into consideration of both semester credit hour and enrollment.

Task Force RECOMMENDATIONS
New Markets

- **Remove barriers**: Remove barriers to faculty innovation and student access to best deliver courses that meet the market demands of students and faculty members. Barriers may include current policies or practices around class scheduling, relationships between/among campuses, fee structures and/or transfer evaluation practices.

- **Advance footprint**: Given demographic, political and economic realities and forecasting, and as the land-grant university for the State of Kansas, Kansas State University will explore opportunities to advance its physical footprint — affirming and extending its commitment to educate college students from entry through graduate study and advanced professional programs.

Undergraduate Enrollment

- **Enhanced recruitment**: Undertake a comprehensive study of other markets (out of state, transfer, traditional, adult, and international, etc.). This study should include, but not be limited to, the impact of differential tuition, tuition waivers, additional staffing requirements, and scholarship plans for alumni and friends. The results should center on predetermined metrics to determine where investments have a high return on investment (ROI). Recruitment efforts with a short-term ROI have the ability to recoup revenue expenditures in less than two years, and as such they have to be considered central given the current financial situation of the institution. Long-term efforts may not display positive results for three or more years but the ones that promise high ROI have to be pursued too.

- **Retention**: Retention efforts are crucial to enrollment management. This complex effort requires total university commitment, additional study, and assessment. This study should include cost analyses for programs, programmatic changes and the ROI achieved when students are retained. Task force discussions included the following topics which are provided here simply as examples.
  - The progress with EAB/SCC advising tool is promising and should have positive impact.
  - Cost and the lack of need-based aid is a significant reason for lack of persistence and retention when academic performance is not a factor.
  - Academic preparedness of incoming students directly impacts retention.
  - Academic units can contribute to retention and should be asked to do so. For example, identify courses that have historically had large populations of freshman students who are not retained to the sophomore year. Develop strategies to include course design changes, “bailout” options and revised course placement.
Many universities have policies requiring on-campus housing for traditional first-time freshmen to improve retention.

- **Diversity and underrepresented populations**: Recruitment or retention strategy should positively affect student populations and increase campus diversity.

- **K-State 2025 Goals**: Track progression and recalibrate recruitment and retention goals by college, as new university admissions standards and advising strategies have been implemented.

- **Continued investment**: Continue to invest in and support existing successful recruitment and retention strategies. Kansas State University should always be the No. 1 choice of high school students in the state of Kansas.

**Graduate Degree and Certificate Program Growth**

- **Meet public needs**: Degree and certificate programs targeted for growth should meet a unique need of the public. K-State should prioritize graduate degree and certificate programs with particular attention paid to those that include a professional skill.

- **Minimize delay**: Programs targeted for growth should be able to accommodate new students immediately or with minimal delays for program adjustments.

- **Maximize investment yield**: While it is expected that investment of resources will be required to enhance the growth of selected programs, ideally these investments should be minimal and should yield a maximum return.

- **Doctoral programs**: K-State should favor growth of doctoral programs to meet 2025 goals, but plans should be justified through cost analysis.

- **Online emphasis**: Online and distance components should be leveraged to enhance delivery of the selected programs.

**Financial Consideration**

- **Data-driven approach**: Strategic enrollment initiatives should be based on the best available data that support the recommended action, i.e., selection of new markets, analysis of under-enrolled programs, potential market need for expansion of academic programs, etc.

- **Four-year review**: Strategic enrollment initiatives should be structured such that a net positive revenue impact is achieved within four years of deployment.

- **Annual reviews for enrollment initiatives**: Strategic enrollment initiatives should be reviewed annually to determine progress towards positive ROI.
Critical scrutiny: If net ROI is not achieved within the designated time frame, continuation of the initiative should be subject to critical scrutiny resulting in a.) a recommendation to continue under restated/revised fiscal targets and time frame or b.) discontinuation of the initiative.

- **Burden-proof:** Strategic enrollment initiatives should not place an additional financial burden on any sub group of students beyond the impact such an initiative may have on the general population of students.

- **Need-based aid:** Identify and cultivate new sources of need-based financial assistance to support desired enrollment levels of students from low and middle income households across the academy. Specifically, such resources should be distributed in an equitable manner to provide strategic, targeted relief to students not able to close the ever growing affordability gap.