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Students, faculty reflect on President Myers' time at Kansas State University

The story below was published in the K-State Collegian on February 2, 2022 marking the tenure of President Richard Myers.

President Richard B. Myers is retiring from Kansas State on Feb 11. He began as the [interim president](#) in April 2016 after former K-State President Kirk Schulz [departed](#) to be president at Washington State University.

Initially, Myers [only intended](#) to serve as the interim until the Kansas Board of Regents found a permanent replacement. However, he eventually decided to submit his name as a candidate for the position, and the Kansas Board of Regents chose him as [K-State's 14th president](#) in November 2016.

As Myers prepares for the next phase of his life, K-State students and faculty members reflect on his time at K-State.

Thomas Lane, vice president for student life and dean of students, said he remembers wondering what working for the former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff would be like.

"I was a little nervous when I first met General Myers," Lane said. "But he is the most humble leader I've had the chance of working with."

Lane said Myers helped him feel a part of the K-State family.

"When I was first coming to campus and just trying to get a sense of who he was, he just put me at ease immediately," Lane said. "I'll never forget that: how welcoming he was to me coming to K-State. He just made me feel right at home, he treated me like I was a Wildcat from the start, and that just made me thankful that I had him as the president who hired me."

Josh Diazdeleon, junior in elementary education, serves as the Student Governing Association basic needs director and as a student ambassador. He said these leadership positions have helped him appreciate Myers' demeanor.

"He never carried himself as if he was higher than anybody else on campus," Diazdeleon said. "You could see him walking around on campus often, which I thought was important. He always seemed to be very well connected to students."

Laurel Littrell, director of library planning and assessment at Hale Library and faculty senate president, said Myers has also been well connected to staff and faculty members on campus.

"President Myers has a very collaborative approach," Littrell said. "He really likes to get as much input as possible. So, he has made sure that there are both faculty and staff representation, and Student Governing Association representation, on committees and when he's getting feedback."

Littrell said the faculty senate presented Myers with a plaque to thank him for his close work with them.

“A lot of times, people will have us put plaques on campus somewhere that’s meaningful,” Littrell said. “President Myers’ plaque is going to go in the Leadership Studies Building because he taught classes there, and that’s a really important place for him on campus.”

Littrell said that she dubbed Myers with a new nickname at his last meeting with faculty senate leadership, “I called him the King of Crisis Management,” Littrell said. “He laughed and said, ‘Sometimes I think crises follow me around,’ and he talked about a friend that told him, ‘Maybe it’s you.’ I’m pretty sure that’s not the case, but I’m awfully glad that he’s been around when the crises have come.”

Michael Dowd, senior in animal science and global food systems leadership, serves as the student body president. He also said that Myers’ legacy would be about how he handled those crises.

“In the last five years, there have been a number of large-scale crises,” Dowd said. “I think President Myers’ legacy is certainly going to go back to being the person that is staying the course, steering the ship and bringing us to where we need to go.”

Lane agreed that one aspect of Myers’ legacy would be his steady leadership through challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic. However, he said another part of his legacy will be with student life on campus.

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“I think one of the legacies that President Myers will have with regards to student impact and enhancing student life is his leadership with the Morris Family Multicultural Student Center,” Lane said. “He was pivotal in getting that project over the finish line, especially with our Kansas Board of Regents and private fundraising efforts.”

Be Stoney, interim chief diversity and inclusion officer and professor of education, also said the campus community will remember Myers for ensuring the construction of the Morris Family Multicultural Student Center.

“What I liked about him being so instrumental is that he just didn’t focus on a specific group. His focus was on all students,” Stoney said. “I strongly feel that the Center will eventually bring us all together to understand its purpose: not to divide us but to bring us together.”

Stoney said Myers’ work on making K-State a more welcoming campus extended beyond the Morris Family Multicultural Student Center, as well.

“He challenged us to do, to think, to believe and to commit to diversity, equity and inclusion, which is something I think as an institution we, in pockets, challenged ourselves to do,” Stoney said. “But as a whole, as an institution, he really challenged us to look at us internally and what we’re doing and how we’re creating inclusive environments.”

On top of helping to build the Morris Family Multicultural Student Center, Dowd said Myers’ ability to raise funds for K-State would long be remembered.

“He was the main leader on the K-State Innovation and Inspiration Campaign, which raised about a billion dollars for K-State’s future success,” Dowd said. “His relationship with our loyal alumni and getting all of those different pieces of the machine to work together and fundraise for the same causes have truly been remarkable, and I think that’s what’s going to be felt on campus.”

Myers’ ability to build relationships with people is something Stoney said she would not soon forget.

“I’m going to miss him,” Stoney said. “I’m going to miss having him around. I’m going to miss his sense of humor, his laughter, different ideas that he and I talked about. I’m just going to miss his presence more than anything. But I know that I have a friend always.”

And with all Myers has done for K-State, Diazdeleon said the outgoing president has set the standard for what it means to be a Wildcat.

“General Richard B. Myers is the definition of somebody who bleeds purple,” Diazdeleon said. “When people say they bleed purple, they’re definitely going to have to reflect a little bit on who General Myers was.”

Dr. Richard Linton will begin as [K-State’s 15th President](#) on February 14, 2022.

Degrees of success: 2020-2021 K-State graduates finding jobs, educational opportunities

New Kansas State University graduates are putting their degrees to work — and earning more.

The latest [post-graduation report](#) from Kansas State University for graduates in the 2020-2021 school year finds 97% are employed or furthering their education — up from 95% for the 2019-2020 school year.

"Last year's K-State graduates were remarkably resilient," said Kerri Keller, [K-State Career Center](#) executive director. "Facing multiple disruptions to their personal and educational lives, they utilized their networks, experiences and resources to land opportunities during one of most challenging years that I have seen in 30 years of career services. I appreciate the employers who remained loyal to K-State and made efforts to connect with our students, whether that meant recruiting through virtual career fairs, online interviewing, listings jobs in the Handshake system or leveraging connections through social media."

The annual post-graduation report is based on surveys conducted within six months of a student's graduation from K-State. The report shows new K-State graduates are popular with employers in Kansas, with 54% of the university's recent graduates accepting jobs in the state. Among bachelor's degree recipients, 58% report being employed in Kansas. And among all graduates, 71% are employed in Kansas or the surrounding states of Colorado, Missouri and Nebraska. Of the remaining employed graduates, 28% had jobs elsewhere in the U.S. and 2% were working internationally.

Degrees from K-State are also proving their value. The median starting salary for new bachelor's degree graduates increased to \$52,000 — up \$2,000 from the previous year. A 2021 survey by [SmartAsset](#) finds new K-State graduates command the highest-average starting salaries in Kansas. And a [new study](#) by a K-State economics professor finds that students who re-enroll in college and complete their bachelor's degree earn more immediately after graduating and experience extra annual income growth.

The knowledge rate for the surveys was 80%.

Leading employers of new K-State graduates include Cargill, Koch Industries, Manhattan-Ogden USD 383 and Shamrock Trading Corporation. More than 3,250 different organizations hired at least one K-State graduate from the class of 2020-2021.

Of those graduates included in the report, 17% were furthering their education through almost 180 different graduate or professional programs with the most common fields of study, including accounting, business administration, law, medicine and veterinary medicine.

The K-State Career Center offers recruiting events that connect students with employers across all industries and career fields. The Career Center provides support to current students and is available to new graduates throughout the calendar year as they pursue their next steps. Services are available to students in person at the Berney Family Welcome Center as well as online through the Career Center website and a variety of virtual resources.



New variety will help farmers increase sorghum yields

Scientists with the [Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Collaborative Research on Sorghum and Millet](#) (SMIL) have developed a sorghum variety they say will provide natural resistance to pathogens and pests that have crippled the crop in humid, lowland areas of western Ethiopia.



Technology Development Institute assists in development of new litter control product for recreational market

Design assistance provided by the [Technology Development Institute](#), or TDI, in the Kansas State University [Carl R. Ice College of Engineering](#) has led to the design and production of a new product to reduce litter and improve the environment during

[Their research is reported](#) in the Jan. 9 issue of *The Plant Cell*, a journal of the American Society of Plant Biologists.

Timothy Dalton, director of SMIL – based at Kansas State University – said the researchers' work will “serve the broader sorghum development community and is a flagship global good, public characteristic of the U.S. land grant mission.”

The K-State lab led by Dalton funded work in Ethiopia and West Africa to map genes and explore more than 2,000 pieces of germplasm in numerous field trials spanning several years.

“The new variety, called Merera, has multiple benefits, including resistance to pathogens and birds, and it yields better than current varieties that Ethiopian farmers have,” said Tesfaye Mengiste, a professor of botany and plant pathology at Purdue University, and the principal investigator for the research.

Mengiste said Merera has shown resistance to Anthracnose, a devastating fungal disease that attacks all parts of the plant – leaves, stalk and head – leaving almost nothing to be used for food (sorghum's primary use in Africa), biofuels or animal feed (the primary use of sorghum in the United States).

A newly discovered gene, named Anthracnose Resistance Gene1, or ARG1, is unique, according to Mengiste.

Mengiste cited recent results with Merera that indicate up to a 43% increase in sorghum yields, which has led to increased income for smallholder farmers.

In 2013, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) invested \$13.7 million to establish the Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Collaborative Research on Sorghum and Millet at K-State. The lab's primary focus is to improve the productivity, disease resistance, agronomy and economic of sorghum and millet in six partner countries.

In 2018, USAID renewed its commitment to SMIL, awarding \$14 million over five years to continue the project's work.

USAID funds several Feed the Future Innovation Labs across the country to harness the capacity of U.S. land grant institutions, other universities and the private sector to improve food security globally.

The sorghum variety recently developed for Ethiopia – while directly benefitting farmers in that country – is much like many other Feed the Future projects that aim to build knowledge to help farmers throughout the world, including the United States.

K-State's online degree programs recognized for excellence in U.S. News & World Report rankings

Kansas State University's [online programs](#) were recognized for excellence in 12 categories in U.S. News & World Report's 2022 Best Online Programs Rankings.

outdoor recreational activities.

Nauti Trash began as an idea from a group of boating enthusiasts who often found litter and other debris left in and around waterways as a result of recreational activities. This was not due to intentional littering but a result of not having a convenient way to secure the trash while being on the water. In an effort to solve this problem and provide people with a product to help promote keeping waterways clean, the team began to brainstorm ideas of how the product should function and its critical aspects.

Once team members had developed a concept for the product, they contacted staff at TDI to design, prototype and test the product. TDI developed an initial design and then assisted in filing a patent application on the product idea. Additionally, TDI worked with the team on creation of a brand name, logo, website acquisition and sourced a manufacturer capable of producing the product in large volume.

The result of the development effort is the patent-pending Nauti Trash floating trash can. The product has a foam base that allows the device to float on the water and a spring-loaded fabric basket that can be compressed flat while stored and then expanded when in use. The basket accepts a tall kitchen trash can liner and can be used for numerous water-related activities such as pools, canoeing, boating, etc., to secure trash while on the water. The trash can also has a strap that allows the device to be connected to a boat, canoe or dock so that it can be held in place while in use.

The female-owned company, based in Manhattan, plans to launch the product this spring and is working to develop a distributor network as well as sell the product online. More information on the product can be found at the company's website, nautitrash.com.

The K-State Technology Development Institute, a U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration University Center, provides a broad range of engineering and business development services to both private industry and university researchers to advance the commercial readiness of new products or technologies. Additional information is available at k-state.edu/tdi.

Study: Re-enrolling and completing a bachelor's degree has positive effect on annual income

Returning to college to earn a bachelor's degree leads to both an immediate increase in annual income after graduation and an increase in annual income growth each year after graduation, according to a Kansas State University economics researcher.

[Amanda Gaulke](#), assistant professor of economics in the College of Arts and Sciences, found that students who return to college and finish a bachelor's degree earn on average \$4,294 more immediately after graduation and experience an extra income growth of \$1,121 per year, on average. The [Economics of Education Review](#) recently published the study.

“No matter how I looked at the data, those who

This year, U.S. News & World Report evaluated 1,700 online bachelor's and master's programs to determine its rankings, analyzing program effectiveness in a variety of areas, including student engagement, admissions selectivity, peer reputation, faculty credentials and training, and student services and technology. Online programs are also ranked for how effectively they serve veterans.

K-State Online saw improvements in the rankings in several categories in 2022. Receiving the highest boost was the online master's programs in education, which jumped from No. 46 to No. 24 nationally and from No. 14 to No. 8 for veterans. Within the suite of education programs, students can choose from 17 master's degree options.

The online Professional Master's in Business Administration also saw an improvement, earning No. 24 nationally and No. 15 for veterans, the highest rankings since the program's launch in 2013. The suite of nine online master's programs in engineering went from No. 34 to No. 30 nationally, while the online bachelor's programs moved up one point to No. 47 nationally and three points to No. 29 for veterans. K-State currently offers 18 bachelor's degree options online.

"Kansas State University continuously strives to provide the best online experience for its students, and we are pleased to see this reflected in the rankings," said Karen Pedersen, dean of [K-State Global Campus](#), the administrative arm for the university's online programs. "We are especially proud that the online bachelor's degree programs once again received the highest ranking of any school in Kansas. Our faculty and staff are committed to providing students with a world-class education regardless of where students live."

For information about degree programs offered through K-State Online, visit online.k-state.edu.

DID YOU KNOW?

Kansas State University will celebrate its 159th birthday on February 16.

returned and finished a bachelor's degree see an economically meaningful increase in income after degree completion," Gaulke said. "The average age at graduation for this sample is 27, so they certainly have a lot of working years left to experience improved labor market outcomes."

While current economic literature mainly focuses on the traditional college student — those who graduate high school, go to college, earn a degree, and then start a career — Gaulke wanted to determine if returning to finish a bachelor's degree resulted in improved economic outcomes compared to both those who never returned and those who returned to complete a bachelor's degree but dropped out again.

Gaulke's study also shows students who re-enroll and earn a degree are significantly more likely to be employed, work more weeks and work more full-time weeks each quarter. Additionally, those students who return but do not complete a degree also realized slight income gains.

Ultimately, businesses and the U.S. economy also benefit from having a trained workforce.

"To maximize economic output, we have to use resources efficiently," Gaulke said. "If employees are not as productive or skilled because they are unable to make well-informed decisions about re-enrolling and completing their bachelor's degrees, this reduces worker productivity."

Gaulke said another benefit of this study is that many institutions of higher education have concerns about enrollment numbers and are expanding their recruitment efforts beyond students coming straight from high school. Many private sector companies now offer services to help colleges and universities re-enroll students who left without completing their degrees. The results of this study suggest that colleges and universities that develop or implement policies to help students re-enroll and finish a bachelor's degree can potentially improve enrollment numbers and also help improve economic outcomes for these students as well.



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