Kansas State University plans for in-person classes for fall 2021 semester

Kansas State University President Richard Myers issued the following letter on February 24 regarding in-person classes for the fall 2021 semester:

We have encouraging news in our yearlong battle with COVID-19. Thanks to everyone doing their part and following the guidelines, we are seeing dramatic reductions in the number of new cases and hospitalizations. Coupled with growing access to effective vaccines, we have a more hopeful future.

We have long anticipated the day when the K-State family could gather again in person. As the pandemic continues to improve, we are planning a fall semester that will be more normal than our 2020-2021 academic year. As with all things COVID-19 related, these plans depend on continued improvement in suppressing the spread of the virus.

If we continue on this positive trajectory, beginning Aug. 1, we plan to move to a phaseout of the university’s reopening plan. This means that the fall 2021 semester will be largely in person, and include in-person classes, research, events and activities. COVID-19 capacities on classrooms and learning spaces will be lifted for the fall semester.

Summer 2021 classes will continue the remote, hybrid and in-person model that we have adapted for the fall 2020 and spring 2021 semesters. And we all need to continue to wear masks, practice physical distancing until these guidelines are relaxed. We also encourage getting vaccinated once you have the opportunity.

This week we are scheduled to receive our first vaccine doses at Lafene Health Center as high contact workers in higher education are now allowed in Phase 2 of the Riley County protocol. The team at Lafene will be contacting eligible individuals based on our established criteria.

We will be releasing more details in the coming weeks as we make adjustments and plan for a new academic year. We wanted to reassure all K-Staters that we are looking ahead so that students, faculty and staff could begin to make plans for an in-person fall semester.

We continue to monitor COVID-19 data and will share numbers on our university dashboard. We will need to be flexible and make adjustments in the coming months. We remain committed to keeping every Wildcat a Wellcat!

We know this past year has not been easy. Please know that we appreciate all the sacrifices you have made to continue learning, teaching and researching during this difficult time. Thank you. I’m truly grateful for the collegiality and support our family has shown to one another through this unprecedented crisis.

K-State graduates report employment, continuing education success
The latest post-graduation report from Kansas State University for graduates in the 2019-2020 school year finds 95% are employed or furthering their education. Although down from the 97% reported for the 2018-2019 school year, Kerri Keller, director of the K-State Career Center, says the percentage is impressive considering the economic havoc caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly for those graduating in 2020.

"It's been a time like no other for new college graduates," Keller said. "I am proud of the persistence and resilience of K-State graduates. I am also grateful for the many alumni who advocate recruiting K-State talent for their companies and organizations. It makes a world of difference for the next generations making their way from college to career."

The report, based on surveys conducted six months following a student's graduation from K-State, is good news for the state in retaining new college graduates, with 52% of K-State graduates accepting jobs in Kansas. When states surrounding Kansas — Colorado, Missouri, Nebraska and Oklahoma — are added, that amount jumps to 69%. Of the remainder of employed graduates, 29% were employed elsewhere in the U.S. and 2% employed internationally.

Starting salaries for the new graduates held steady, with the median salary at $50,000 — the same as the previous year.

The response rate to the surveys was 81%.

Leading employers of new K-State graduates include Cerner Corp., Kiewit, Textron, Geary County USD 475 and Manhattan-Ogden USD 383. More than 1,360 different organizations hired at least one K-State bachelor's graduate from the class of 2019-2020.

Of those graduates reporting placement, nearly a quarter of them were furthering their education through almost 190 different graduate or professional programs that range from accounting to veterinary medicine.

The K-State Career Center offers recruiting events that connect students with more than 800 employers. 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.

Kansas net farm income climbed in 2020 despite COVID-19; 2021 looks promising

Kansas farms appear to be moving out of the shadow of the global pandemic, according to two Kansas State University agricultural economists.

Ad hoc government payments made because of the pandemic and higher than expected grain prices since last summer boosted average estimates for 2020 Kansas net farm income to $137,000, a 7% increase over $128,000 the previous year.

Even though 2020 is past, the $137,000 is still an estimate. K-State economists will not have final numbers from the KFMA until the end of May.

Office of Institutional Research launches Interactive Factbook

In an effort to ensure transparency, Kansas State University's Office of Institutional Research recently launched an Interactive Factbook on its website.

Users across the university and the public can view summary student data in areas of enrollment, credit hours, degrees awarded, and retention and graduation statistics. The tool also provides trend
The outlook is a far cry from what was expected late last spring. In May 2020, an initial estimate of Kansas Farm Management Association net farm income was produced, said K-State associate professor Gregg Ibendahl. Using KFMA member farms as a baseline at that time, K-State economists predicted an 87% drop in net farm income.

KFMA member farmers work with agricultural economists across the state to enhance members’ production and financial management skills.

“At the time, COVID-19 was starting to spread across the U.S. and the economic effect on much of the country was devastating,” Ibendahl said. “Prices for both grains and livestock had dropped, leading to questions about how severe the crisis might be for farmers.”

Since then, the profitability outlook changed course on two key developments, according to Ibendahl, an agricultural economist with K-State Research and Extension. First, the USDA announced programs to help both livestock and grain producers affected by the pandemic. The Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) provided $23.6 billion to producers through the first two rounds of the program. Additionally, grain prices rose last summer and are now at levels not seen since before the pandemic.

In developing their estimates, Ibendahl and extension agricultural economist Dan O’Brien addressed seven major areas, including yields, prices, crop acres, expenses, crop insurance, government payments from the farm bill, and CFAP or ad hoc government payments. Each area was projected down to the farm level to estimate net farm income for each of the 588 KFMA grain farms for 2020 and 2021.

Their full preliminary report issued Feb. 3 is available online. A more complete analysis of 2020 Kansas net farm income based on KFMA data will be available this spring.

“While it originally appeared that COVID-19 was going to play havoc with net farm income, the average grain farm at least will come through the year (2020) with higher profitability,” Ibendahl said, but noted that not all farms will weather the market effects of the pandemic as well as the average grain farm.

The economists projected that net farm income in 2021 could increase another 35% to $185,000, based on futures prices. Those projections are uncertain, however, and hinge at least in part on whether futures prices translate to actual higher farm prices and if rainfall amounts are normal enough to allow for average yields.

The team also cautioned that the western United States is in a La Nina drought, so the prospect of average yields is questionable. In addition, higher grain prices tend to lead to higher expenses for fuel, fertilizer and seeds, which could cut into farm profitability.

DID YOU KNOW?

K-State’s Lafene Health Center administered 870 vaccines to Kansas State University faculty, staff and students at its first COVID-19 vaccination clinic.

Staff at the office will continue to enhance and improve the Interactive Factbook, including adding more student-related information as appropriate and information in other areas.

The Office of Institutional Research was formally established in October 2019 by combining the former Offices of Planning and Analysis and Assessment. Currently, the Office of Institutional Research is comprised of two primary functional teams: Reporting and Analytics and Assessment of Student Learning.

College of Education receives national award for exemplary elementary education programming

The Kansas State University College of Education is the winner of a national award from the Association of Teacher Educators for developing innovative and collaborative elementary education programming.

Announced on the final day of its virtual annual conference, Feb. 13-17, the college was presented with the Billy G. Dixon Distinguished Teacher Program Award. The association established the award to honor outstanding teacher education programs that exemplify collaboration and emphasize exceptional quality.

The award highlighted three of the most recent programming efforts of the college’s curriculum and instruction department: the Master of Arts in teaching; the online Bachelor of Science in elementary education; and the Kansas Statewide Teacher Education Pathway for Underserved and Place-bound, or K-STEP UP, program.

The online master's in curriculum and instruction, which includes the Master of Arts in teaching, is ranked 10th in the nation by U.S. News and World Report.

The online bachelor's in elementary education was developed in 2016 and was recognized for its yearlong student teaching experience for place-bound students. This is a significant departure from how the teacher preparation program traditionally operated with future teachers completing a semester-long internship at a school with a longstanding relationship with the college.

K-STEP UP is an innovative teacher pathway program that charts a student's path from high school to the student's local community college to the online teacher preparation program at K-State. It is targeting underserved and place-bound students in Kansas City and Liberal, Kansas.