

Kansas State University - Fort Riley Partnership Program

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Purpose of the Collaboration:

The purpose of this institutional partnership is to mutually support the strategic objectives of two major regional institutions – the U.S. Army’s First Infantry Division community at Fort Riley and Kansas State University. The common institutional objectives shared by both members of this partnership are professional development, quality of life, and community development, which are achieved by meeting shared human developmental needs through the practice of community-building. K-State commits its intellectual and social capital, educational and cultural platforms, and national leadership relationships to deliver educational, applied research and a myriad of outreach activities for the 61,000-person military community of Fort Riley. Fort Riley affords the university rare access to engage their people, missions, and geo-strategic relationships to advance the educational and research enterprises of university faculty, students, and staff. For over a decade, the enduring success has been the application of university-

based human sciences and services with military professionals assisting military families' well-being and healthy lifestyles among the stressors of an era of persistent combat deployments abroad. Most recently, K-State's expertise in the area of human capital development, readiness and entry into the workforce has been applied to Fort Riley's challenges of transitioning soldiers and families back into gainful employment, independent lifestyles and social readjustment. All elements of the K-State campus community have been brought to bear on these three mechanisms of social change aimed to broaden the military-connected constituent beyond their unique social culture.

Length of Partnership:

16 years

Community Partners:

U.S. Army 1st Infantry Division & U.S. Army Garrison-Ft Riley

Community Impact:

K-State provides over 5,500 individual "institutional broadening experiences" to promote wellbeing, professional development, and cultural competency engagements each year to Fort Riley community members. It provides subject-matter expertise and technical assistance in a myriad professional practice fields in support of the 4,000-person Department of the Army Civilian workforce. Many of these

programs are considered by the DOD as “cost avoidance” that significantly reduce budgeted financial costs while making qualitative enhancements to the services rendered to military families and soldiers. Additionally, the Fort Riley community now enjoys an unprecedented level of access and participation in all campus-related activities to include scholarship, sports and arts experiences as integral members, thus creating vital social connections and boosting quality of life for transient military families residing in a small Midwest town of unfamiliar culture. At the strategic level, this partnership provides senior military leaders access to non-military/defense leaders (university) for consultation on organizational challenges from perspectives based upon differing institutional logics. As a direct result of this partnership, Fort Riley has achieved numerous distinctions from the DOD that a typical divisional-base installation would not be able to achieve—as reported by senior Fort Riley officials and formal notification.

Institutional Partners:

K-State Military and Veteran Affairs, College of Health and Human Services, College of Education Military EdCats, McCain Auditorium, K-State Theater, Music and Dance, KSU Athletics,

Institutional Impact:

K-State derives a multitude of positive impacts resulting from this unique partnership. Most notably is the access

afforded to the research community to develop, test, and implement evidence-based practices needed to sustain and improve military societal and operational demands—many of which are transferred to the larger field of service. As a result of strategic access to national defense leadership, K-State sent a delegation to the active battlefield of Basra, Iraq in 2010 to help the U.S. Army and Iraqi Minister of Education restore service of its university. As an unintended consequence, K-State has realized a 10.6 percent overall growth in enrollment of quality military-connected students through earning a reputation of trust and inclusion with the military—particularly among the Post 9-11 era generation. For K-State students, this partnership has resulted in major growth of academic internships at Fort Riley from 21 to 118 in 10 years.

In addition to the growth of these academic programs, more public sector employment opportunities are offered for graduates. Today, each of the 11 NCAA sports teams have formal partnerships with military units at Fort Riley, stimulating peer-to-peer growth and mutual understanding between student-athletes and soldiers through engaging activities. Off the courts and fields, these student-athletes participate in military training, conduct sports camps for children of deployed soldiers, and send game videos to troops in combat. Lastly, the successful performing arts “military audience outreach” program resulted in the DOD awarding a service medal to its director.

