

DELIVERING AN UNMATCHED AND IMPACTFUL STUDENT EXPERIENCE

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

JUNE 2023

BACKGROUND

A highly tailored and exceptional student experience is a hallmark of the K-State identity. Home to an increasing diverse student population, with faculty and staff who are committed to student success, the institution has an opportunity to further differentiate and build upon an area of notable strength, leveraging and pooling its resources to reimagine what it means to prepare students not just for success, but for their roles as future leaders and change agents.

As the demographics of college-going learners evolve, K-State must reimagine how it advises learners to meet these changing needs – developing the underlying structures that facilitate curated advising to not only help students navigate their academic needs and pathways to their future career but also address their holistic well-being. This reimagined focus on student experiences must be fully integrated into the academic curriculum in a way that prioritizes learning both inside and outside the classroom through high-impact experiences. The university must also broaden this holistic focus on the student experience by ensuring employees and students alike have knowledge of available services and how to access programs and resources before they ever step foot on campus or begin their positions or degree programs, providing early and sustained access to resources that help ensure students' success.

PROCESS

A task force comprising some of the university's leading voices and diverse perspectives was assembled to better understand the current experiences of learners across the institution and to identify opportunities to differentiate and continuously improve the K-State student experience.

TASK FORCE MEMBERS

- Kathleen Hatch, Associate Vice President for Student Wellbeing, Student Life, Task Force Co-Chair
- Mary Tolar, Associate Professor and Dean, Mary Lynn and Warren Staley School of Leadership, Task Force Co-Chair
- LaVerne Bitsie-Baldwin, Director, Multicultural Engineering Program, Carl R. Ice College of Engineering
- Tara Coleman, Associate Professor, Sunderland Foundation Innovation Lab, K-State Libraries
- Melinda Cro, Professor, Modern Languages, and Assistant Dean of Student Success and Engagement, College of Arts & Sciences
- Jeff Ebeck, Senior, Finance and Economics, College of Business Administration

- Olivia Law Delrosso, Instructor and Assistant Dean of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging, College of Business Administration
- Jared Meitler, Director, Pre-Professional Advising Center, Office of Student Success
- Dan Moser, Professor and Associate Dean, Academic Programs, College of Agriculture
- Ellyn Mulcahy, Associate Professor and Director, Masters of Public Health, College of Veterinary Medicine
- Greg Musil, Attorney with Rouse, Frets, White Goss Gentile & Arhodes, Leawood KS, and Trustee for Johnson County Community College, K-State Alumni
- Sara Partin, Masters Student, English, College of Arts & Sciences
- Ennis Rios, Coordinator, Military Affiliated Resource Center, Student Life
- James Teagarden, Associate Professor, Special Education, Counseling and Student Affairs, College of Education
- Sara Thurston, Director, International Student and Scholar Services, International Programs
- Kristin Waller, Senior Associate AD for Evans Student-Athlete Success Program and Deputy Title IX Coordinator, K-State Athletics
- Corey Williamson, Executive Director, K-State Student Union and Director, Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation Initiative, Student Life
- Patrick Winter, Executive Director, Recruitment and Admissions, Office of Enrollment Management
- Thomas Lane, Vice President for Student Life and Dean of Students, Student Life, ex-officio

This task force met four times from February to April 2023, participating in extensive and in-depth discussions, reviewing data, analyzing best practices, defining the ideal future state for K-State, and developing ideas for bridging the gap between the university's current and future state.

The task force developed the following recommendations – including priority areas, initiatives, and metrics – that will enhance the student experience.

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

CREATE A SUPPORTIVE CULTURE OF HOLISTIC AND INTERDISCIPLINARY SUPPORT FOR THE WHOLE STUDENT

While K-State is well known for its positive student experience, the institution has experienced challenges in providing appropriate and robust advising support to students that anticipates and eliminates barriers to student success. Ever-changing student needs and needs of future learners will have different expectations for the support provided by higher educational institutions, including many of the ancillary supports that contribute to overall student success. This is particularly true for diverse student populations, for whom our university systems have not been developed. Through strategic outreach and planning, academic advising can be a catalyst for timely graduation and connecting students with just-in-time resources while also building the academic foundation to be successful. Recent advances in technology allow the institution the opportunity to streamline the more transactional advising functions and maximize the people-based supports to provide deeply impactful and transformational experiences for students. Additionally, K-State has an opportunity to reimagine student support, creating a supportive culture of holistic support for students. By providing all students with a more comprehensive advising model that seamlessly integrates and aligns academic and non-academic

supports, K-State can ensure that all students experience a culture of care – elevating what is already an area of strength to even greater heights.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

SHORT-TERM (0-3 YEARS)

- Develop cultural competence training and professional development skills among faculty and staff
- Fully integrate EAB Navigate and related predictive analytics across the institution
- Develop one-stop-shop to streamline existing student resources and serve as a single point of contact for referrals
- Identify and develop pathways and related supports that meet the needs of specific student populations
- Develop integrated student support teams of faculty, advisors, tutors, alumni mentors, industry experts, well-being coaches, and additional support resources
- Leverage best practices and data-informed decision making to support student transitions
- Establish financial literacy initiative for students
- Develop an academic advising training pipeline tied to annual review, promotion, and compensation
- Develop standard orientation resources for all first semester students (undergraduate, transfer, graduate)
- Establish standard models of navigation for advising access across the university and within colleges
- Evaluate and elevate K-State-to-student communication practices

LONGER-TERM (4-7+ YEARS)

- Expand advising capacity and equip advisors to support the needs of all students, including specific student populations
- Align the university advising model with NACADA pillars of academic advising
- Develop communication guidance for advisors to implement high-impact practices into programs of study
- Scaffold advisor interactions for student advising based on academic year, level of engagement needed, and upcoming milestones
- Create more streamlined and real-time connections between classroom learning and the job skills necessary for career success
- Utilize artificial intelligence as part of advising model to supplement human advising and help guide students and answer questions about basic advising processes or needs

INTEGRATE APPLIED LEARNING EXPERIENCES FOR ALL STUDENTS

Students participating in experiential education opportunities often gain a better understanding of course materials and build insight into potential career interests, skills, and their passions. Increasing these applied learning experiences, which can be embedded within or parallel to courses or a degree program, can enable students to apply concepts socialized in the classroom into experiences in an industry, service, or embedded experience. In connecting students more intentionally with the communities, industries, and world they will ultimately live in and support, K-State can further build upon its impressive career placement rate in creating a recurring pipeline of students into industries and communities that benefit both the student experience and the workforce. These seamless experiences inside and outside the classroom can also drive increased student satisfaction with their overall university experience, further affirming students' affinity for and support of the institution as they become alumni and begin their journey toward a successful career.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

SHORT-TERM (0-3 YEARS)

- Work with faculty, alumni, and community partners to connect students with career options in their first and second year
- Establish scholarships to support students during experiential learning opportunities
- Create department or college-level academic and experiential maps to align student engagement with classroom learning
- Expand institutional support (financial and administrative) for faculty who offer undergraduate research opportunities
- Establish peer mentorship program to support students in navigating applied learning opportunities
- Leverage undergraduate student worker and work-study positions as means for providing applied learning experiences for students
- Host immersive, discipline-focused on-campus experiences for high school juniors and seniors
- Create university awards and recognition system for departments and students participating in applied learning
- Expand participation/utilization of abbreviated study away opportunities for all students

LONGER-TERM (4-7+ YEARS)

- Require all students complete a high impact, applied learning experience prior to graduation
- Develop easy-to-navigate resources connecting students with high-impact practice opportunities available across the institution
- Partner with industries and communities to expand paid internship opportunities for students
- Create zero-credit internship classes for students to gain applied learning experiences with no additional tuition costs
- Expand micro-credential and certificate programs to supplement learning inside and outside the classroom
- Develop experiential transcripts to complement academic transcripts that showcase student competencies and skills

EXPAND FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR ALL STUDENTS

Increasingly, students that experience financial stress find that this stress is exacerbated by enrolling in college, particularly for historically excluded and adult learner populations that are growing but for whom cost can be the most significant barrier to graduation. This trend is often cited as one of the most impactful in deterring students from attending a university and diminishing the value proposition of higher education; this also impacts graduate students, who often face significant economic difficulties throughout their degrees as institutional aid amounts have remained stagnant as the cost of living has dramatically increased. As K-State continues to expand and diversify its learner population, it must offer robust guidance and support to all students seeking it, which becomes a crucial part of their retention and success as a student. Expanding scholarship offerings and pioneering new and innovative funding models for learners will enable K-State to not only grow enrollment but help ensure the success of these learners in completing their degrees and prepare them for future career success.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

SHORT-TERM (0-3 YEARS)

- Establish competitive benefits and other measures to support graduate students
- Improve scholarship portal to enhance the student navigation and application process
- Establish minimum pay floor for undergraduate student worker positions
- Expand scholarship funding for undeclared students
- Create opportunities for industry partners to sponsor students
- Review and revise financial policies that inhibit students from progressing through their degree program
- Work with the KSU Foundation to expand availability of philanthropic scholarships for students

LONG-TERM (4-7+ YEARS)

- Expand academic calendar to offer year-round courses and graduate assistant funding
- Establish need-based finish-line scholarships for students in their final three semesters
- Establish endowed doctoral student funding lines
- Fund summer bridge programs

SUCCESS DEFINED

The task force identified a number of prospective metrics to monitor the success of these priority recommendations and the outcomes they are designed to generate for the institution, including the following:

- Amount of scholarship funding available to undergraduate and graduate students
- Average amount of financial support provided to graduate students
- Number of industry partnerships to sponsor students
- Number of endowed doctoral student funding lines
- Advisor-to-student ratio
- Number of twelve-month funding opportunities available to graduate students
- Percent of students who participate in an applied learning experience
- Year-to-year student persistence rates
- Average response times to student requests within foundational functions of the university (advising, financial aid)