

# Next-Gen K-State

**Strategic plan 2030**







# Contents

**Letter from the President and Provost** ..... 4

**Key Achievements** ..... 6

**Introduction** ..... 8

**Our Guideposts**..... 10

**Our Strategic Imperatives**..... 12

**The K-State Opportunity Agenda** ..... 14

**Our Priority Framework**..... 17

**Theme 1:** Accelerate Academic Innovation to Meet the Needs of Students  
and Lifelong Learners ..... 18

**Theme 2:** Build and Sustain the Next-Generation Land-Grant Workforce at K-State ..... 22

**Theme 3:** Deliver an Unmatched and Impactful Student Experience..... 24

**Theme 4:** Drive Transformational Discovery, Innovation and Scholarship..... 28

**Theme 5:** Integrate Engagement Across All We Do ..... 32

**Theme 6:** Invest in the Jobs and Economies of Tomorrow ..... 36

**Our Critical Enablers:** Pursue Operational Excellence as One K-State..... 40

**Strategic Plan Measures of Success** ..... 42

**Our Future** ..... 44

**Appendix:** Peer and Aspirational Institutions..... 46



# A letter from the president and provost

Three years ago, we asked our K-State community a simple but profound question: What does it mean to truly lead as a next-generation land-grant university? Thousands of voices from across our campuses, our state and our broader community answered that call, and together we built a plan to match their ambition. That plan, Next-Gen K-State, launched in September 2023 as both a promise and a commitment to transform our institution in ways bold enough to make an impact and enduring enough to last.

As we have pursued that vision, a clearer and more urgent framing has emerged: a next-generation land-grant defined by trust, speed, partnerships and shared growth.

The land-grant promise is not outdated, but the model we have historically used to deliver it must evolve. If Land-Grant 1.0 was about opening access to practical education, and Land-Grant 2.0 expanded the research enterprise, then Land-Grant 3.0 must be about translation, engagement and impact at speed.

At K-State, engagement is defined as the bridge between knowledge and impact. It is the process of working alongside communities, industries and public partners to apply our expertise to real-world challenges. Through these reciprocal partnerships, research becomes solutions, teaching becomes opportunity and service becomes lasting community impact. Rooted in purpose. Powered by discovery. Measured by outcomes. That is the standard we are holding ourselves to at K-State.

We are proud to keep that promise. Our roots in Kansas give strength to our global vision, and what is taking shape at K-State today is a testament to what this community can accomplish when it chooses to grow together with purpose and integrity.

## The evidence of our progress is real and growing:

- **Our fall 2025 incoming freshman class was the fourth largest in K-State history** — a signal that learners recognize K-State as a place where they can thrive and that our efforts to share our story are working.
- **Our research enterprise surged to over \$281 million in annual expenditures in FY2025** — a remarkable achievement and a powerful demonstration that our faculty and researchers are meeting the moment with world-class scholarship and discovery.
- **Our donor community matched that energy with nearly \$300 million in giving in FY2025** — keeping us well on our way to the \$2 billion cumulative goal we have set for 2030.



Beneath those numbers is a deeper story of structural change driving progress:

- **We leveraged our Opportunity Agenda** to launch bold interdisciplinary efforts in water, digital agriculture, biomanufacturing, community health and well-being, and nuclear energy, with emerging investments in artificial intelligence and sustainability that will define our scholarship for decades.
- **We established an institutional definition of meaningful applied learning** — a foundational step toward our commitment that every K-State degree-seeking student graduates with real-world experience, which prepares them for a successful career.
- **We elevated K-State Extension to the university level through the Office of External Engagement**, making clear to the state of Kansas and to ourselves that our land-grant mission of engagement is central to our work as a university.
- **We invested in our own people and our collective success** with a new budget model that rewards the units and colleges driving our plan forward, a completed compensation study that will allow us to better recognize and retain our exceptional workforce, and more than \$19 million awarded through the One K-State Fund to fuel innovation and accelerate strategic priorities.
- **We advanced a campus master plan** that guides investments, including landmark facilities such as the Western Star Global Grain and Food Center, K-AIRES and the new Kansas Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory. These facilities will support teaching, research and engagement with service to our state.

As we look ahead, our priorities reflect both what we have learned and what we know still lies within reach. We will press forward on enrollment, not simply to hit a number, but because reaching more learners — particularly those from Kansas communities counting on us — is core to who we are and the impact we drive across Kansas. We will focus with renewed intensity on student success, helping the people who

choose K-State to graduate with meaningful credentials and the skills that open doors in our region's economy, supporting them along the way. We want our graduates walking into high-demand careers, not walking out with financial burdens that diminish the value of what they worked so hard to earn.

We will also sharpen our focus on moving K-State's discoveries from our laboratories and classrooms into practical applications for the world. That means building stronger pathways for commercialization, licensing and innovation, translating our research into economic opportunities for Kansas. It means deepening the partnerships with industry, communities and other institutions to share resources and multiply our collective impact. And it means measuring our footprint in Kansas not just in research dollars or enrollment figures, but in the Extension learners we reach in all 105 counties and the statewide economic impact that we are committed to growing to more than \$3.5 billion by 2030.

What happens at K-State impacts the world. The teaching, research and engagement occurring on our campuses in Manhattan, Olathe and Salina, at our agricultural research centers, in all 105 counties and in communities far beyond our state shape a better world. Our land-grant promise is essential to our mission, and we take inspiration and motivation from the trust our community has placed in us as we carry this plan forward. Innovation with integrity, shared growth and an abiding commitment to the people who make our university great are foundational to the impact we make here in Kansas and beyond.

We are grateful for the partnership of every member of this community — faculty, staff, students, alumni, donors and Kansans from every walk of life — who have made these first three years possible. The best is still ahead of us. Together, as One K-State.

Go 'Cats!

**Richard Linton**

President, Kansas State University

**Jesse Perez Mendez**

Provost and Executive Vice President, Kansas State University



# Key achievements

## **21,213 students enrolled**

Highest total in a decade, up 7.6% since FY22

## **#3 best employer in Kansas**

Recognized by Forbes as one of the state's best employers in 2025

## **72% six-year graduation rate**

A 3 percentage-point increase since FY22

## **Best employer for new graduates**

Recognized by Forbes as an employer of choice

## **#1 research university in Kansas**

Voted by students and reported by Niche, 2025

## **67% of graduates earn above Kansas' median salary**

Within one year of graduation

## **\$281 million in research expenditures**

A 32% increase since FY23

## **Top 100 university for patents granted**

Recognized by the National Academy of Inventors, 2026

## **\$115 million raised for the Ag Innovation Initiative**

Secured since 2022

## **\$166 million invested in modernizing facilities**

Addressing deferred maintenance in student and research spaces, FY23-25

## **\$8.97 returned for every dollar invested in K-State**

Contributing directly to Kansas' economy

## **\$428 million in state and federal funding FY22-26**

The highest total in K-State history

## **\$2.3 billion in economic impact across Kansas**

Advancing toward a goal of \$3 billion by 2030

## **\$297 million raised in FY25**

A philanthropic record, with \$1.19 billion raised since FY22

## **Over \$9.5 million invested in direct faculty and staff support and awards**

Via the One K-State Fund, FY24-26

## **5 interdisciplinary initiatives addressing global challenges**

Focused on community health, secure energy, digital agriculture, water and financial planning









# Introduction

K-State is one of the nation's most storied higher education institutions.

In 1863, shortly after Congress adopted the Morrill Act, K-State became the first operational land-grant university in the U.S., leading the way for the more than 100 land-grant universities that followed. Land-grants like K-State were established to expand educational opportunities for the working class and served a key role in helping to create and sustain the middle class in every state. In the 163 years since, K-State worked to deliver on that mandate, empowering Kansas residents and all who seek an education at K-State with the knowledge they need to be successful, engaging in groundbreaking discovery and innovation; and serving the state through community engagement and K-State Extension.

**Today, K-State once again finds itself in a position to define the future of land-grant universities.**

In 2026, the world around K-State today is a far different place, and the challenges are coming at us faster than ever before. We have seen pandemics, climate shifts, artificial intelligence and more transform our world at a pace that outstrips the timelines and technology of a different era. The land-grant promise — that opportunity, knowledge and progress should be available to all — remains as relevant as it was the day the Morrill Act was signed. But we must be honest about a harder truth: The land-grant promise is not outdated, but the model we have historically used to deliver it must evolve. The question is not whether the land-grant mission still matters. It does. The questions we must answer are these: Are we organized to deliver on that mission at the pace and scale required to meet the demands of today and tomorrow? And if our values are timeless, is it the way we operate that must change? At K-State, our answer to both is yes, and this plan is our commitment to act on it.

K-State will lead as a next-generation land-grant university, guided by an ambitious strategic plan that embraces and elevates the key differentiators that make our university special while driving the structural and cultural transformation required to deliver on our mission at the pace and scale the world demands. We imagine boldly, but we build responsibly. We pursue progress with integrity because the public good, it is the promise at the center of our mission. And we understand that a university can be excellent and still not be believed. Trust is the critical currency validating our relevance and impact. It does not come from telling communities we matter; it comes from operating in a way that proves we do, over and over again.

We recognize it is not solely K-State's responsibility to redefine higher education for the next generation of our state, nation and world, but it is a mantle we choose to carry and an opportunity that we embrace. We will do this in close partnership and alignment with the Kansas Board of Regents (KBOR), which provides tremendous leadership in the state for higher education. This strategic plan is aligned to directly support and reinforce KBOR's focus on serving Kansas families, Kansas businesses and the state's economic prosperity.

This plan builds on the foundation of existing plans, programs and frameworks that continue to move our university forward like K-State Core, our Strategic Enrollment Management Plan and our Economic Prosperity Plan. It also provides us with a new lens to review these plans and refine accordingly to match our future vision.

As we move forward with this plan, we will be nimble and adaptive to the world around us, meeting our learners and partners where they are and working alongside them to address their most pressing needs.

As a next-generation land-grant university, K-State must be more than a group of departments, colleges and campuses. It must function as a system. The challenges that land-grant universities address — such as food, water, health, energy and communities — are interconnected and cannot be solved in isolation. By responding to these challenges across disciplines and convening industry experts and community stakeholders to inform future action, K-State enacts its mission and commitment to the public good. That is what affords us the opportunity to earn trust.

We will build on our exemplary track record of serving, supporting and growing traditional students by broadening our focus and programs to meet the needs of all types of learners, including nontraditional and adult learners seeking to build new skills or earn credentials that can help them advance in their careers. This means we must also evolve the traditional student definition and build the structures, workforce, places and spaces that attract, serve and grow new types of learners as integral members of our K-State community.

We will leverage our core areas of strength in new and exciting ways, bringing together key elements of K-State's outstanding student experience, teaching, discovery and engagement to spark groundbreaking interdisciplinary collaborations and generate positive economic, community and societal impacts.

We will prioritize and integrate engagement at all levels of K-State, working just as effectively and impactfully out in the community as we do on our campuses with a focus on generating economic prosperity and positively impacting the state of Kansas at every turn.

We will open every entry point to K-State as opportunities to amplify the experience people have with our university from K-State Athletics events and the tremendous passion they inspire to the Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art, the K-State Gardens and McCain Auditorium, where arts and culture beautifully intersect and engage visitors and community members alike.

The same is true for our built environment, where we will intentionally maximize and elevate our three physical campuses (Manhattan, Olathe and Salina), our online programs, our presence in all 105 counties, our research stations and Extension offices across the state, and the significant work our faculty, staff and students do in the communities we support.

We will demonstrate both in our words and actions that we are "One K-State." This means building and maintaining a culture that is open to all and brings together people, perspectives and disciplines at every opportunity, knowing we have greater impact when we work together. This is particularly true given our strong culture of shared governance at K-State. We recognize that our governance councils are key partners in implementing this plan, and we stand ready to leverage these partnerships in new and exciting ways as we continue building our future together.

K-State is committed to setting the new standard for learning, creativity, discovery and engagement that will transform lives around the world. Especially those right next door.





# Our guideposts

The significant data and input that drove this process also helped clarify our mission, define our vision and articulate the core values that we must live out and hold ourselves accountable to as we move forward.

They orient our thinking. They inspire us to be the best possible versions of ourselves. They influence every decision we make. They serve as the foundation for building a culture of mutual accountability. And they challenge us to operate as One K-State in all we do.

## Mission

The mission of Kansas State University is to foster excellent teaching, research and service that develop a highly skilled and educated citizenry necessary to advancing the well-being of Kansas, the nation and the international community. The university embraces all, encourages engagement and is committed to the discovery of knowledge, the education of undergraduate and graduate students, and improvement in the quality of life and standard of living of those we serve.

## Vision

Kansas State University will lead the nation as a next-generation land-grant university — setting the standard for learning, creativity, discovery and engagement that transforms lives in Kansas and around the world.

## Values

### Connection

We are stronger together — cultivating trust and building relationships to connect our K-State community with our state, nation and world.

### Courage

We lead with bold conviction — rising to the moment, even when the course is uncharted, to deliver the greatest good for areas of greatest need.

### Impact

We listen, adapt and challenge the status quo — leading change through learning and discovery that transforms lives and creates shared prosperity for all.

### Learner-Focused

We welcome all who seek to learn and grow — providing an exceptional experience that helps all achieve their potential.

### People-Centered

We are everything because of our people — supporting, valuing and inspiring our entire K-State community and championing a culture of belonging for all.

### Stewardship

We are committed to our future — using our resources responsibly to leave a positive, lasting legacy.





# Our strategic imperatives

Our strategic plan prioritizes areas of focus and elevates strategies that will accelerate our institution toward our next-generation land-grant vision by 2030.

There are many university indicators and metrics that will help guide our success and hold us accountable to our goals. These metrics are what communities can see, experience and feel.

Our colleges, units, departments and affiliates will also set goals and metrics more targeted to their respective environments but that connect with and help to advance our university vision, goals and future, starting with the following strategic imperatives and goals. More detailed targets for each of these strategic imperatives are included later as our strategic plan measures of success.

These goals and metrics will guide the priorities and strategies contained in this plan, along with the actions we undertake to achieve them, the investments we prioritize as a university, the type of workforce we will need and how we most effectively and strategically use our resources. We will be intentional about reenvisioning the underlying structures that support our work and enable our future — recognizing that to serve new types of learners and grow our impact to even greater heights, we must think and operate differently than we ever have before.



## Imperative 1

We will grow our total enrollment to 36,200 learners across all of our campuses and formats by steadily increasing our degree-seeking and credit-bearing student populations, expanding our alternative credential-seeking learner populations and — for the first time — counting the learners we reach through community engagement and Extension efforts. We envision this learning population of 36,200 to include:

- 23,000 credit-bearing undergraduate and graduate students studying at one of our three physical campuses or online.
- 10,000 alternative credential-seeking learners, including those enrolling in continuing education courses and earning microcredentials to pursue upskilling opportunities and seek skills that can broaden and enhance their value in the workplace.
- 3,200 community-engaged learners — learners that K-State affects in communities through our engagement and Extension efforts.

## Imperative 2

We will improve our retention and graduation rates across all student populations, growing our first-year retention rate to 90%, our four-year graduation rate to 57% and our six-year graduation rate to 75% by implementing pathways and support structures that help all students progress through their K-State journey and earn their degree.

## Imperative 3

We will provide every degree-seeking student with applied learning experiences before they graduate, fulfilling our commitment to prepare students for life beyond K-State starting early in their college experience.

## Imperative 4

We will grow our research enterprise and annual research expenditures to \$350 million and our faculty-initiated competitive awards to \$300 million with a strong focus on conducting world-renowned, problem-based interdisciplinary research that solves grand challenges and makes transformative impacts. For the first time, K-State will measure research success not only through expenditures but also by commercial impact, with a goal of 80 new invention disclosures annually by 2030.

## Imperative 5

We will nimbly and proactively meet the needs of learners, employers and society, working aggressively to understand and anticipate those needs and aligning our programs, services and structures to equip learners with the skills and experiences they need. We will measure our effects on learners by their median income five years post-graduation, our effect on employers by the percentage of K-State graduates employed six months post-graduation, and our effect on society through the 5,750 undergraduate and graduate degrees we seek to confer annually by 2030.

## Imperative 6

We will be known as a university that is open to and aggressively pursues partnerships at all levels with a shared focus on making it easy and seamless for partners to work with K-State. We will seek out 550 new partnerships per year in the academic, community/nonprofit, corporate, and international areas, and define partnership as a written agreement that specifies an outcome.

## Imperative 7

We will be a positive force for Kansans — generating significant economic impact for the state of Kansas, contributing to the economic prosperity of all 105 counties, building social mobility for Kansans, and solving problems in our state that can help create a brighter future for our region, nation and world.

## Imperative 8

We will become One K-State in all we do, supported by a culture that binds and connects us — prioritizing a mindset of operational excellence at all levels to move our university forward.

## Imperative 9

We will become an employer of choice in Kansas and higher education that prioritizes a culture of well-being, satisfaction and engagement, competitive rewards, recognition of excellence, opportunity, continuous improvement and innovation.

## Imperative 10

We will grow our total fundraising and philanthropic giving to new heights — with a target of raising a total of \$2 billion from FY21-22 to FY29-30, further amplifying our ability to serve and support our learners, scale our impact and fulfill our mission.



# The K-State Opportunity Agenda

K-State has a long history of excellence and leadership in many areas of scholarly work. However, as with most higher education institutions, our successes often occur in isolated or smaller-scale parts of the university.

**Today, we have an opportunity and an imperative to bring our resources and expertise together in a way that respects our unique structure and challenges historical norms.**

This starts by elevating disciplinary development and excellence and leveraging these single-discipline strengths toward interdisciplinary areas of focus that both build upon our strengths across the institution and lean into problems K-State is positioned to help solve on a grand scale. These core areas of opportunity are designed to be inherently inclusive so that everyone across our institution can see themselves reflected in them in teaching, research, Extension and engagement. They underpin and cut across all aspects of our strategic plan in how we will achieve our imperatives, accomplish our goals and advance our priorities.

As a land-grant university that also maintains a Carnegie R1 research classification for doctoral universities with very high research activity and a Carnegie Foundation Community Engagement classification, we have a unique opportunity to further differentiate our teaching and research by integrating our K-State Extension network deep within these areas of focus. Through Extension, we will leverage our statewide network to offer clear pathways and community-based partnerships to address real and pressing challenges across the state, honing best practices locally and regionally that can be scaled for global impact.

These focus areas reflect a deliberate choice to operate as a system rather than a collection of disciplines. Land-grants sit at the center of systems that cannot afford failure: food, water, health, energy, security and communities. The challenges affecting these systems rarely occur in isolation; they are deeply interconnected. Addressing them requires collaboration across agriculture, engineering, veterinary medicine, human and animal health, data science, business and engagement — not as adjacent efforts, but as a unified institutional response. The K-State Opportunity Agenda is a commitment to that kind of systems-level impact: locally accountable and globally connected, with solutions tested under real constraints that can scale from the prairie to the world.

## Community health and well-being



**Underlying drivers: establishing community sense of place, improving the health and wellness of communities, building more resilient communities, improving health disparities and outcomes, enhancing education access and outcomes, supporting economic prosperity and meeting the needs of communities**

This focus area encompasses understanding physical, social and cultural features of a community; researching social dynamics and cohesion within a community; identifying and addressing factors that drive health disparities, including social determinants of health and healthcare policies; and identifying and enhancing the structures, policies and practices that impact accessibility to education.

## Sustainability



**Underlying drivers: working toward a more sustainable future in water, air, energy, soil, climate change, biodiversity and community resilience**

Relevant work includes water and resource management practices; the natural and environmental factors that impact resource usage, health, the environment and society; the conservation and restoration of biodiversity; and economic policies and cultural practices and their impacts on human ecology.

## Global food security and biosecurity



**Underlying drivers: enhancing and expanding food production, developing safe and sustainable agricultural practices and studying animal and plant infectious diseases to improve global health and security**

Relevant work includes practices to increase food production; the impact of social, political and environmental policies and factors on production; and strategies to prevent and control infectious diseases, as well as environmental factors that contribute to their prevalence. Other areas may include communication and human impact, supply chain considerations, and the interactions between policy and economics that affect food access and security.

## Enabling technologies



**Underlying drivers: innovating technologies rooted in nuclear energy, advanced manufacturing, artificial intelligence, Internet of Things (IoT), big data and data science, cybersecurity, aerospace technology, creativity and smart and connected communities**

This focus area can include considerations of how to advance and understand the implications of natural language processing and machine learning, as well as the integration of technology across foundational elements of modern human life. It also includes the opportunity to consider the ethical and societal impacts of these integrations.

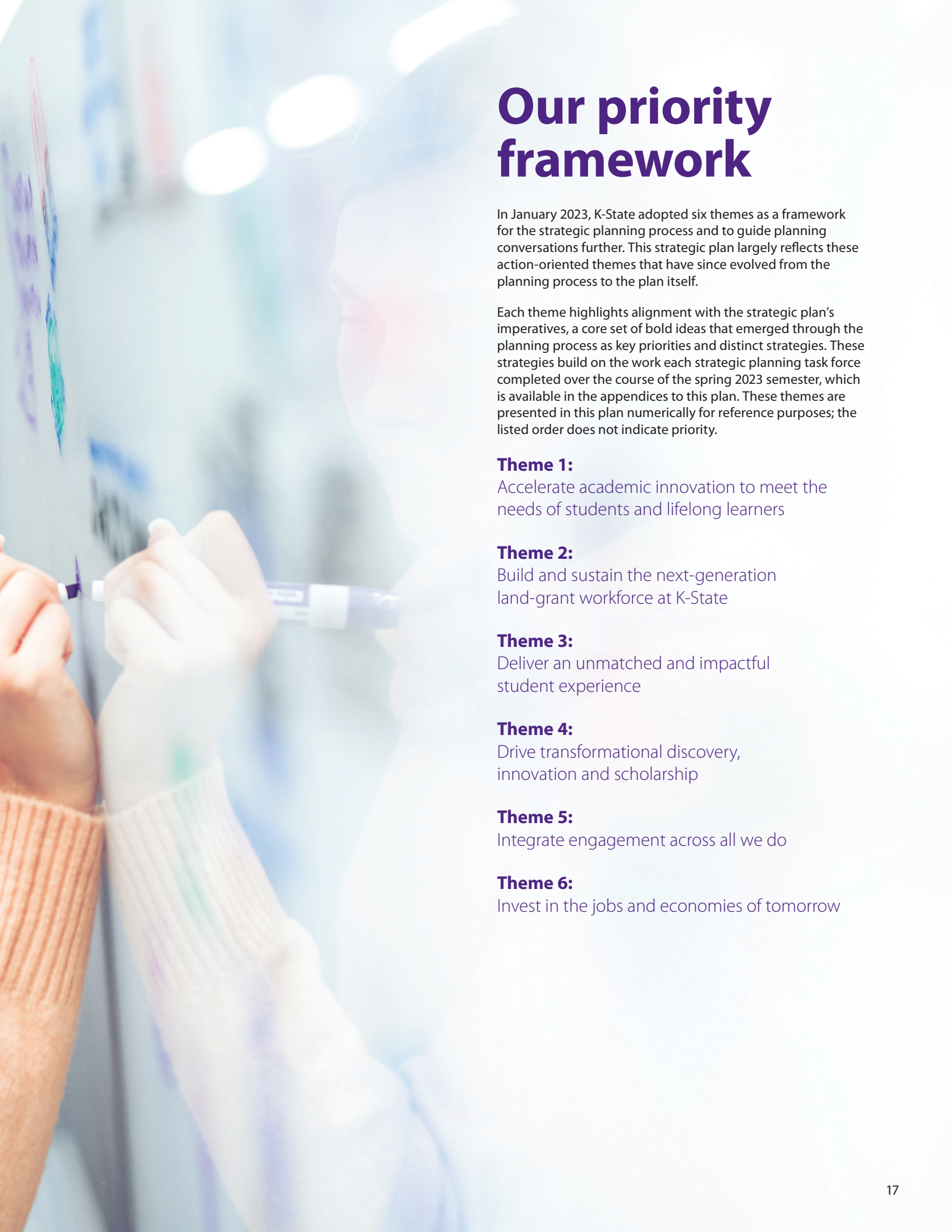












# Our priority framework

In January 2023, K-State adopted six themes as a framework for the strategic planning process and to guide planning conversations further. This strategic plan largely reflects these action-oriented themes that have since evolved from the planning process to the plan itself.

Each theme highlights alignment with the strategic plan's imperatives, a core set of bold ideas that emerged through the planning process as key priorities and distinct strategies. These strategies build on the work each strategic planning task force completed over the course of the spring 2023 semester, which is available in the appendices to this plan. These themes are presented in this plan numerically for reference purposes; the listed order does not indicate priority.

## **Theme 1:**

Accelerate academic innovation to meet the needs of students and lifelong learners

## **Theme 2:**

Build and sustain the next-generation land-grant workforce at K-State

## **Theme 3:**

Deliver an unmatched and impactful student experience

## **Theme 4:**

Drive transformational discovery, innovation and scholarship

## **Theme 5:**

Integrate engagement across all we do

## **Theme 6:**

Invest in the jobs and economies of tomorrow





## Theme 1:

# Accelerate academic innovation to meet the needs of students and lifelong learners

We must reimagine everything about how we educate and prepare learners — broadly challenging ourselves to move nimbly beyond our traditional approaches and lean into a culture of disruption, agility and change.

Like many higher education institutions, K-State is often challenged in how quickly it can adapt to meet the demands of the world around it, particularly when it comes to aligning educational programs with what employers and communities are expressing in real time as key areas of need and ensuring graduates are uniquely positioned for immediate success. We now have an opportunity to think differently from other universities in how we more rapidly meet these needs, building an internal culture of innovation and leaning into our status as a land-grant institution that prioritizes external engagement at all levels. To do so, we will reimagine our structures, systems, processes, facilities, campuses and even credentials and degrees with an underlying focus on championing academic innovation and ensuring students remain at the cutting edge of their respective disciplines.

In the short term, this means building upon our exemplary student experience to offer applied learning opportunities for all of our learners, starting with integrating these experiences into the curricula for all of our degree-seeking undergraduate students. It also means implementing strategies that help achieve greater balance among our graduate student population by accelerating the growth of our master's programs and maintaining the strength of our doctoral-seeking student population, particularly as we work to achieve our bold research imperatives for 2030.

In the long term, this means considering how best to use our footprint to innovatively serve learners based on when, where and how they want to learn, such as redefining the traditional higher education business model focused on the student credit hour. We recognize there is no one-size-fits-all solution when it comes to meeting students' needs. In doing so, we will approach this idea with flexibility, knowing that what works in some disciplines and for some individuals may not work best for others.

Meaningful progress is already underway on all of these fronts. Enrollment Management and the colleges have expanded access for future Wildcats through direct admission for first-time freshmen, Transfer Navigator programs that build community college pathways, evening and Saturday campus visit options, and the Come Back Cats initiative targeting re-engagement of more than 19,000 stopouts — students who have acquired credit hours, but not completed their degree and are not currently enrolled. KSU Foundation scholarship utilization has been increased to improve yield among admitted students, and proactive outreach through EdSights has been scaled to support persistence and retention.

Academic Innovation accelerated online and hybrid program development — including new professional master's degrees, certificates and microcredentials — and implemented market-responsive processes for program design to assess demand, streamline approvals and bring new offerings to market more quickly.

Our advising infrastructure has also been significantly strengthened. All academic colleges are transitioning to a professional advising model; the Pre-Professional and Exploratory Advising Center has been established to serve undecided, in-transition and pre-professional students, and sample four-year degree plans are now required for all majors — a proven best practice for reducing time to degree and improving completion rates. MAPS and KOMPASS summer bridge programs have been expanded from three colleges to all academic colleges, extending intensive transition support to first-generation and low-income students across the institution. These coordinated efforts are making K-State more accessible, more responsive, and more aligned with what learners and employers need.

## Bold ideas

- **Develop programs, courses and curricula** linked to the K-State Opportunity Agenda
- **Embed applied learning experiences** into degree and credential plans for all learners through credit-based internships, service-learning, practicums, education abroad and other strategies
- **Rebalance our graduate school population** by steadily growing our doctoral student levels and rapidly accelerating the growth of our master's degree-seeking students
- **Establish AI literacy as a core competency** for every K-State learner, equipping students to use and critically evaluate AI tools responsibly across their disciplines and future workplaces

## Key priorities

### Build and promote a culture of academic innovation throughout the institution

- Establish a central university hub to support innovation in teaching
- Develop self-directed undergraduate and graduate programs that facilitate interdisciplinary curricula
- Design experiential learning hubs of students and community members embedded in communities throughout the state, nation and world
- Expand degree completion pathways that incorporate prior learning credit and stackable credential systems
- Implement market-responsive program design processes to continuously assess workforce demand, streamline curricular approval and bring new credentials, certificates and degrees to market rapidly in alignment with employer and learner needs
- Enhance digital learning infrastructure — including faculty development, instructional design capacity and technology-enabled course quality — to support the growth and rigor of online and hybrid learning at scale

- Sustain and grow the Pre-Professional and Exploratory Advising Center as the university's central hub for undecided, in-transition and pre-professional students, providing structured, coordinated support that connects students to the right academic path earlier and reduces time to degree
- Complete the transition of all academic colleges to a professional advising model, supported by consistent onboarding, ongoing professional development and coordinated central infrastructure that ensures every student has access to high-quality, informed advising regardless of college or program

### Leverage institutional differentiators to drive academic innovation across all facets of K-State

- Establish greater presence in communities where learners engage in need-based projects and curricular and co-curricular activities
- Build the infrastructure and enhance coordination to expand cross-campus enrollment opportunities
- Design opportunities for undergraduate and graduate research within communities
- Develop work-based learning programs that allow employees to complete degrees while fully employed
- Scale Transfer Navigator programs and pre-college partnerships to build early, structured pathways into K-State for community college and high school learners
- Expand reengagement initiatives to reconnect stopout learners with pathways to degree completion, tapping the substantial population of former K-State students who left before earning their credentials
- Expand MAPS and KOMPASS summer bridge programs to all academic colleges, ensuring that first-generation and low-income students across every discipline have access to intensive transition support, academic preparation and community-building before their first semester

### Position K-State as the first-choice education and business partner in Kansas

- Establish partnerships with community colleges to strengthen pathways to K-State and curricular connections
- Build partnerships with companies to provide targeted continuing education opportunities in coordination with all K-State campuses
- Leverage existing partnerships and build new relationships to expand credential and degree offerings through platforms or consortia



## Prepare the next generation of innovators, doers and lifelong learners

- Develop resources and rewards for faculty to innovate and adapt their coursework to include applied learning experiences
- Integrate community-building programs into first-year student experiences built around K-State research priorities or grand challenges
- Accelerate the development of post-baccalaureate microcredentials that offer continuous learning opportunities for alumni and others
- Enhance student-facing academic planning tools — including degree audit, advising platforms and onboarding resources — to improve recruitment conversion, early engagement and on-time degree completion for all learner types
- Require and maintain sample four-year degree plans for all majors, giving prospective and current students a clear roadmap to graduation and helping reduce time to degree, improve completion rates and help students and advisors identify obstacles early
- Leverage the more than \$35 million raised philanthropically for applied learning experiences — including study abroad, internships, undergraduate research, leadership and community-engaged learning — to expand access and ensure that every K-State student can complete a meaningful applied learning experience regardless of financial constraints
- Build a university AI literacy framework and a tiered training and microcredential ecosystem that gives students, faculty and staff a shared foundation for safe, effective and discipline-relevant AI use

## Imperative alignment

- **Imperative 1:** Grow enrollment to 36,200 total learners
- **Imperative 2:** Improve retention and graduation rates for all student populations
- **Imperative 3:** Provide every degree-seeking student with applied learning experiences
- **Imperative 5:** Nimble and proactively meet the needs of learners, employers and society
- **Imperative 6:** Build partnerships at all levels of K-State
- **Imperative 7:** Be a positive force for the Kansas economy
- **Imperative 8:** Focus on operational excellence and being One K-State in all we do











## Theme 2: **Build and sustain the next-generation land-grant workforce at K-State**

We must establish a foundation that enables us to grow our next-generation land-grant workforce, inclusive of a common culture, systems and structures that value, incentivize, recognize and empower faculty and staff.

K-State is filled with dedicated faculty and staff who are passionate about the institution and committed to the success of the students and communities they serve. We will amplify and channel this passion by ensuring K-State is a fulfilling, rewarding and equitable place to work for all faculty and staff.

This means thinking differently about how we have traditionally supported our workforce in areas such as evaluations and career paths, where we must streamline and standardize our approaches to ensure all employees have merit-based pathways to rewards and advancement. We must modernize how we approach rewards and recognition, from working with colleges and departments to expand how faculty contributions are acknowledged through promotion and tenure to establishing more flexible benefits and rewards that are customized to meet the unique needs of our employees.

This mindset of thinking differently when it comes to our workforce also applies to how, when and where we work. It means shaping our workforce in different ways to support the changing and growing learner population we will serve in the coming years across all types of learners and delivery formats, to drive the research and discovery we will develop and to amplify our economic and community impact

through engagement. We are also committed to establishing workspaces where our workforce can be most effective, from standardizing and expanding our approach to hybrid and remote work to investing in the facilities and physical structures our faculty and staff need to do their jobs effectively.

Progress toward these goals is real and recognized. K-State has been named the No. 3 Best Employer in Kansas by Forbes, reflecting a genuine improvement in workplace culture and continued investment in people. We've completed a comprehensive study, establishing market-rate benchmarks for all faculty, staff and graduate students. Implementation will occur over three fiscal years to establish market-competitive salary structures, ensure appropriate pay placement within ranges, address wage compression and define compensation practices. A multi-phase budget transformation effort is underway to obtain resources to invest into competitive compensation, ensuring that K-State has the financial infrastructure to attract and keep the talent it needs. Faculty development training for campus fundraisers, coordinated through the Office of the Provost, is strengthening the professional capacity of frontline staff. These investments signal that K-State is serious about becoming an employer of choice — not just in name, but in practice.

## Bold ideas

- **Ensure 100% of K-State faculty and staff** are paid within the appropriate market-aligned pay ranges and build supporting structures focused on competitiveness and performance
- **Expand university guidance to colleges and departments for promotion and tenure criteria** to fully value and recognize the breadth of faculty contributions to the university and those it serves
- **Implement a consistent approach and common framework** for faculty and staff evaluations
- **Grow faculty, staff and graduate students** to meet our research and enrollment targets
- **Establish a culture of career growth, pathways and opportunity** for all employees

## Key priorities

### Become a leader among land-grant institutions in workforce compensation, benefits and opportunity

- Explore additional, flexible benefits customized to support all employees
- Establish a baseline funding package and more consistent work expectations for graduate students
- Implement the completed compensation study across three fiscal years — bringing all faculty, staff and graduate students to market-rate salaries, addressing wage compression and establishing clearly defined compensation structures that are transparent, equitable and competitive with peer institutions
- Execute the multi-phase budget transformation effort, which prioritizes aligning resources to support K-State's long-term competitiveness and its ability to recruit and retain top talent

### Attract and retain high-performing, talented and engaged faculty and staff

- Hire and retain faculty and staff with varying expertise and experiences
- Realize meaningful, positive change in K-State's overall workforce climate

- Build relationships with target doctoral programs to recruit graduates to work at K-State
- Establish and grow endowed faculty positions with defined recognition levels — attracting philanthropic investment into faculty support and providing a durable, donor-funded mechanism to recruit and retain distinguished scholars in priority areas
- Invest in enhanced development training for campus faculty, coordinated through the KSU Foundation and Office of the Provost, to improve their knowledge and secure more engagement directly by the university in earning philanthropy at K-State.
- Expand Cornerstone and Keystone Scholar opportunities to create immediately accessible, donor-funded support for faculty across colleges, strengthening K-State's ability to recruit and retain leading scholars through philanthropic partnership

### Elevate employee well-being at all levels of the university

- Establish a university well-being philosophy
- Develop structures, processes, resources and a culture that promotes workforce reward and recognition for faculty and staff at all levels
- Build on K-State's recognition by Forbes Magazine as the No. 3 Best Employer in Kansas by sustaining the cultural investments, workplace improvements and recognition practices that earned that distinction

## Imperative alignment

- **Imperative 1:** Grow enrollment to 36,200 learners
- **Imperative 4:** Grow research expenditures to \$350 million annually and faculty-initiated competitive awards to \$300 million annually
- **Imperative 7:** Be a positive force for the Kansas economy
- **Imperative 8:** Focus on operational excellence and being One K-State in all we do
- **Imperative 9:** Become an employer of choice in Kansas and higher education







## Theme 3: **Deliver an unmatched and impactful student experience**

We must take an already strong student experience and make it even stronger — empowering students with support and experiences that position them for immediate and lifelong success.

A highly tailored and exceptional student experience is a hallmark of K-State, particularly for our undergraduate students. Home to an increasingly changing student population, with faculty and staff who are committed to student success, K-State can further differentiate itself from other institutions and build upon an area of notable strength — leveraging and pooling our resources to reimagine what it means to prepare students for their roles as future leaders. This means leaning into how we serve a much broader and more expansive learning population that includes nontraditional learners.

One of the most impactful ways we will build upon our student experience is by preparing them for what comes next in life after graduation. As part of this commitment, we will both provide opportunities and require that every degree-seeking student participates in at least one high-impact applied learning experience prior to their graduation. These opportunities can and will be broad in nature so that we can fulfill that commitment to everyone, recognizing that different types of experiences will resonate with different types of learners and disciplines. We will ultimately work to identify how best to integrate applied learning into all programs, beyond just those involving degree-seeking students.

At K-State, we are focused on the holistic learner experience. We know that student success is not built in the classroom alone. It grows when learners feel supported in every part

of their lives. This means treating financial wellness, physical activity and social connection — alongside academic and mental health support — as integrated priorities across every part of the institution. In practical terms, it means focusing on enhancing the affordability of a learner's time with K-State and the value they receive for their investment, while establishing a more comprehensive, integrated student advising and support model that aligns academic and non-academic services seamlessly around each learner.

At the cornerstone of all this, we will ensure employees and students alike have knowledge of available services and how to access programs and resources before they even step foot on campus, providing early and sustained access to resources that help ensure their success.

Significant investments in data, advising infrastructure and direct student support are strengthening our ability to act on these commitments. The Willie AI Assistant initiative now sends proactive, text-based check-ins to all first-year and new transfer students — covering well-being, sense of belonging, academic preparedness and financial concerns with staff follow-up for students who need it. We are planning an expansion to all second-year students. In addition, we've established an on-campus residency requirement for all first-time freshmen, deepening early connection to the K-State community during the critical first year.

The Office of Data, Assessment and Institutional Research developed more than 80 business intelligence tools and dashboards and built a new cloud-based enterprise data warehouse, providing institutional leaders with timely, actionable insights across enrollment, student success and academic strategy. These tools allow us to proactively and swiftly target necessary interventions to improve our retention rates and student well-being, ensuring that K-State's support systems reach the learners who need them most.

## Bold ideas

- **Reimagine embedded holistic student support** for all learners to include academic, co-curricular and wellness resources
- **Expand access to applied learning experiences for all learners**, including opportunities such as internships, undergraduate research, judging and design teams, on-campus employment, education abroad and student organizations

## Key priorities

### Create a supportive culture of holistic support for the whole student

- Aggressively expand the one-stop-shop concept to streamline student resources and referrals to student services
- Develop standard orientation resources for all first-semester students, including undergraduate, transfer and graduate learners
- Standardize advising protocols and technology to deliver proactive, consistent and data-informed advising across the university
- Develop a coordinated, student-facing communication plan and platform that delivers the right information on deadlines, resources, opportunities and support services to the right students at the right time
- Scale the Willie AI Assistant initiative to all second-year students, building continuity of support through the highest-risk period for attrition

- Embed success coaches within every academic college to provide in-college, relationship-based student support that complements advising
- Expand student well-being programming through the Morrison Family Center for Student Well-being, Lafene Health Center, Counseling and Psychological Services and residence hall initiatives
- Strengthen faculty participation in academic progress reports to surface student concerns earlier in the semester, enabling timely intervention before challenges escalate into withdrawal or academic failure
- Develop and expand targeted belonging and success programs in partnership with academic colleges, ensuring that students who face the greatest barriers to persistence have visible, college-level communities of support
- Scale proactive, data-driven student outreach platforms to identify students showing early signs of disengagement and connect them with advising and support resources before they fall behind
- Leverage the enterprise data warehouse and institutional intelligence dashboards to equip academic and student affairs leaders with timely, actionable data on enrollment trends, student progression, financial aid impact and retention risk across all learner populations
- Establish universal career milestones as a foundation for undergraduate development across all colleges and majors, repositioning the Career Center as a strategic curricular partner to embed career readiness directly into the academic experience

### Integrate applied learning experiences for all degree-seeking students

- Host immersive, discipline-focused, on-campus experiences for high school juniors and seniors
- Partner with industries and communities to expand paid internship opportunities for students
- Develop experiential transcripts to complement academic transcripts that showcase student competencies and skills



### Enhance affordability and value for all learners

- Accelerate work to align college and institutional financial aid activities and provide coordinated, proactive outreach to learners
- Create opportunities for industry partners to sponsor applied learning for students
- Establish endowed doctoral student funding lines
- Evaluate and refine undergraduate financial aid strategies to improve yield among admitted students and reduce financial barriers for first-generation and Pell-eligible learners
- Grow the K-State Family Scholarship program, which establishes approximately 30 new endowed scholarships annually and identifies new major-gift donors, as a sustained engine for expanding access and connecting K-State families to the institution through philanthropy
- Maximize scholarship deployment, ensuring that the more than \$295 million raised since FY22 for student success and affordability reaches students efficiently and that no awarded scholarship dollars sit idle while learners face financial barriers
- Enhance degree audit and academic planning tools so that students — particularly those navigating reentry or complex pathways — can clearly see their progress, understand their options and move efficiently toward graduation
- Ensure all students have access to an individualized academic degree planning tool connected to the degree audit so students can map a personalized, semester-by-semester path to graduation and advisors can identify schedule risks, financial aid implications and course sequencing issues proactively

### Imperative alignment

- **Imperative 1:** Grow enrollment to 36,200 total learners
- **Imperative 2:** Improve retention and graduation rates for all student populations
- **Imperative 3:** Provide every degree-seeking student with applied learning experiences
- **Imperative 5:** Nimble and proactively meet the needs of learners, employers and society
- **Imperative 7:** Be a positive force for the Kansas economy
- **Imperative 8:** Focus on operational excellence and being One K-State in all we do
- **Imperative 10:** Grow total, combined fundraising to \$2 billion by 2030











## Theme 4:

# **Drive transformational discovery, innovation and scholarship**

We will transform how we carry out the research mission in an integrated, interdisciplinary way. This transformation will sharpen focus areas and culture while strategically building capacity through structures, resources and people. Internal research development programs will be coordinated, core facilities will be strengthened, and strategic constellation and cluster hiring will support the full continuum of research from discovery through commercialization.

K-State will build on our historic strength in world-class discovery, innovation and scholarship by redefining our culture of discovery with our land-grant mission at the forefront and by leaning into our status as the only university in the state with a presence in all 105 Kansas counties. This is how the university will fulfill its promise to be rooted in purpose. Powered by discovery. Measured by outcomes.

To do so, we must establish a clear research agenda aligned with the K-State Opportunity Agenda that leverages our core disciplinary strengths, advances interdisciplinary approaches through both basic and applied research, and accelerates the growth of the research enterprise in new and unprecedented ways. K-State will implement a coordinated internal funding pipeline — including seed funding, support for scored-but-unfunded proposals, interdisciplinary seed grants and an expanded Pathway to Commercialization program — to move ideas from proof of concept through preliminary data generation, team formation, extramural funding support and ultimately to new products and services. Early-career faculty will be supported in their disciplinary development so they can become future research leaders and catalysts for

disciplinary and interdisciplinary discovery. These efforts will align with strategically funded constellation and cluster hires in biomanufacturing, grain sciences, food as medicine, the Kansas Water Institute and nuclear engineering to build critical mass in our opportunity agenda priority areas.

As a comprehensive university, K-State will recognize and elevate discovery, innovation and scholarship across the entire institution — including creative endeavors in the arts and humanities that may not generate the same level of external funding but deliver equally valuable impact for the university, its communities and the world. We will expand and sustain internal programs such as the DASH (design, arts, social sciences and humanities) Awards and establish the HEART (humanities, education and arts research travel) Award program to provide competitive grants and travel support for disciplines underserved by traditional external funding. These programs ensure that all faculty have meaningful pathways to scholarship support and will help surface collaborators and ideas from these disciplines for major interdisciplinary proposals.

K-State must also build environments, facilities, structures and resources that support large-scale, interdisciplinary scholarship. The university will more efficiently coordinate and elevate these activities across the institution, better leverage its existing footprint and provide robust pre- and post-award support for large-scale grants. It will spur technology transfer and commercialization of faculty-developed intellectual property and grow the talented research workforce that makes this work possible.

K-State will invest in consolidated core research facilities and associated staff — including the Biosecurity Research Institute, or BRI, Biomedical Core Facility, Materials Characterization Core, Biomanufacturing Core and Training Facility, and Integrated Genomics Facility — with dedicated operating, equipment and renovation funds, supplemented by targeted infrastructure investments in renovations and new construction to modernize research spaces. These platforms will lower the cost and risk of advanced research and development, make it easier for Kansas industry partners to collaborate with K-State, retain high-value research talent in-state and convert federal and private research dollars into technologies, startups and high-wage jobs. Faculty, graduate student and staff capacity will expand commensurate with 2030 research targets, using approaches such as cluster hires aligned with the K-State Opportunity Agenda to attract and retain talent in areas central to future success.

Ultimately, K-State will be the partner of choice for organizations seeking to amplify their vision and resources through university talent, research collaboration and statewide connections.

The Agriculture Innovation Initiative, a \$210 million public-private partnership project, is delivering a suite of purpose-built facilities designed for interdisciplinary collaboration: the L. Eldon Gideon Agronomy Research and Innovation Complex; the Western Star Global Grain and Food Center connecting animal, food and grain science programs; the Weber and Call Hall renovations for animal sciences; and the Bilbrey Family Event Center for equine and livestock teaching and Extension, which celebrated its ribbon cutting in October 2025. These new facilities are platforms for the kind of public-private partnership and cross-disciplinary discovery that defines the next-generation land-grant university and drives innovation that strengthens Kansas agriculture, rural communities and the global food system.

No university in the country is better positioned to lead biosecurity research than K-State. The BRI operates at biosafety level-3 (BSL-3) standards and is one of the few facilities in

the world capable of large-animal biocontainment research involving cattle, swine and sheep. Immediately adjacent sits the National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility, a \$1.25 billion USDA investment and the first facility in the U.S. with BSL-4 containment for large livestock, chosen because of K-State's biosecurity infrastructure and expertise. The \$130 million investment in a new Kansas State Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory completes the research and testing hub within Manhattan and will link diagnostic surveillance, BRI's applied research and NBAF's highest-containment science into a unified campus ecosystem.

That ecosystem is further strengthened by the Biomanufacturing Core and Training Facility, which is currently being renovated at the Bioprocessing and Industrial Value Added Products facility. Designed to support corporate partners in advancing diagnostics, prophylactics and therapeutic countermeasures for infectious animal diseases, it provides the capability for full-scale biomanufacturing of multiple products and extends K-State's role from detection and research into development and scale-up. This integrated biosecurity and biomanufacturing ecosystem positions Kansas as a first responder to emerging animal disease threats and as a preferred partner for federal agencies and global industry, protecting Kansas agriculture, national food security and global biosafety.

To accelerate commercialization, the Kansas State University Research Foundation, or KSURF, has been restructured into a more proactive commercialization arm, with new leadership focused on translating faculty discoveries into startups, industry partnerships and statewide economic growth. KSURF is launching the Wildcat Innovation Network, which pairs early-stage K-State teams with experienced alumni, industry leaders and investors to help translate research and ideas into viable startups that change the world. Together, the restructured KSURF and strengthened corporate engagement functions demonstrate that K-State is open for business and committed to becoming a leading innovation hub that tightly connects academic research with real-world applications.

Research intelligence and proposal support tools are already helping faculty identify funding opportunities, map collaborators and track emerging research trends. The planned launch of Atom Grants in August 2026 will further strengthen grantsmanship capacity through AI-enabled grant discovery, opportunity matching and workflow tools that reduce administrative burden and improve submission competitiveness across all disciplines and career stages.





## Bold ideas

- **Align the research enterprise with the K-State Opportunity Agenda** by intentionally deploying resources in these areas, including a structured internal research pipeline from seed funding through commercialization and strategic constellation and cluster hiring in priority domains such as biomanufacturing, grain sciences, food as medicine, water and nuclear engineering
- **Transform and elevate the research enterprise, structures, resources and culture** so that interdisciplinary research on grand societal challenges becomes the default, with arts, humanities, libraries and social sciences expertise explicitly integrated into major proposals and interdisciplinary graduate programs
- **Implement strategic cluster hires to grow priority research areas**, backed by central salary and start-up investments that build critical mass and vertically integrated research teams aligned with the K-State Opportunity Agenda

## Key priorities

### Build and advance K-State's research agenda

- Establish and expand transparent, well-communicated internal seed funding opportunities that support the full continuum of the research lifecycle — from proof-of-concept through preliminary data generation and support for interdisciplinary teams — to new product development and commercialization
- Establish processes to integrate arts, humanities and library expertise into major interdisciplinary grant proposals, leveraging the DASH and HEART awards as platforms to surface collaborators and ideas from these disciplines
- Audit and reestablish centers and institutes intentionally built around K-State Opportunity Agenda areas of focus
- Build and support interdisciplinary graduate programs aligned with priority research areas, including models that expose students to multiple methods, disciplines and faculty teams
- Expand the DASH Awards program to provide competitive internal grants that catalyze research and creative activity in disciplines underserved by traditional external funding, ensuring all faculty have meaningful pathways to scholarship support

### Invest in robust infrastructure to support research and scholarship

- Develop a universitywide strategy and investment plan for resourcing basic through translational research.
- Reorganize and invest in expanded centralized grant support teams and structures to provide consistent, high-quality pre- and post-award support for investigators
- Establish consolidated core research facilities with shared instrumentation to give faculty, students and industry partners shared access to sophisticated equipment and expert staff, enabling industry to collaborate, co-invest and retain high-value research activity in Kansas
- Integrate interdisciplinary research environments as default components of future research buildings, encouraging co-location of complementary disciplines and shared support services
- Modernize research facilities, equipment and instrumentation to meet the needs of contemporary and emerging research fields
- Embed rewards and incentives for developing intellectual property and pursuing commercialization into promotion and tenure criteria
- Accelerate the translation of faculty discoveries into startups, industry partnerships and statewide economic growth through strengthened new venture development capabilities
- Deploy and scale enterprise research intelligence platforms — including Dimensions, Wildcat Scholar and Atom Grants — to help faculty identify funding opportunities, map collaborators, analyze research trends and streamline proposal development across disciplines and career stages
- Provide enterprise and locally hosted AI environments that allow researchers to work with sensitive, proprietary or regulated data securely and establish clear guidance on AI disclosure, reproducibility and intellectual property to protect the integrity and commercial value of K-State scholarship
- Strengthen the K-State Libraries as core research infrastructure and expand the university's leadership of the Kansas Interlibrary Loan program to power competitive research and improve Kansas economic impact

## Reinforce and strengthen the research workforce

- Expand support and mentorship for early-career faculty in their disciplinary development, with a focus on achieving disciplinary excellence and enabling future interdisciplinary pursuits
- Expand opportunities for vertically integrated projects that unite undergraduate students, graduate students and faculty in long-term, interdisciplinary team-based research
- Reimagine and standardize graduate support mechanisms across the university to improve competitiveness, transparency and equity
- Design incentives and expectations that encourage principal investigators to meaningfully include graduate students in their research grants, strengthening student training and research capacity
- Develop and implement a model for rotational, interdisciplinary graduate programs that expose students early in their training to multiple labs, disciplines and methods
- Expand recognition programs to celebrate faculty whose scholarship and creative activity have achieved measurable impact, reinforcing a culture of excellence that motivates continued pursuit of external funding and interdisciplinary collaboration

## Imperative alignment

- **Imperative 4:** Grow research expenditures to \$350 million annually and faculty-initiated competitive awards to \$300 million annually
- **Imperative 6:** Build partnerships at all levels of K-State
- **Imperative 7:** Be a positive force for the Kansas economy
- **Imperative 8:** Focus on operational excellence and being One K-State in all we do
- **Imperative 10:** Grow total, combined fundraising to \$2 billion by 2030





A photograph of two women shaking hands at a conference. The woman on the left is wearing a red and black patterned vest over a blue and white striped shirt. The woman on the right is wearing a dark blue jacket. They are both smiling. In the background, other people are visible at a conference table.

## Theme 5: **Integrate engagement across all we do**

We must maximize the impact of our engagement, outreach and Extension services — fully leveraging and elevating engagement as the third co-equal pillar of our land-grant mission.

K-State's mission-driven imperative for service and engagement distinguishes us from other higher education institutions. This differentiator has helped catalyze the growth and impact of engagement initiatives taking place at all levels of our university. There are significant opportunities to amplify, elevate and communicate our impact through service and engagement in a more integrated and aligned way across the institution, the 105 counties and four tribal areas we support, and the nation and world we positively impact. We will use our many achievements in engagement as expectations K-State has for all faculty, staff and students in how they engage with one another and the world around us. All Things Kansas offers a platform to cohesively bring these elements together with a joint focus on community engagement and economic impact and prosperity for the state.

We will also lean into our core strengths and distinctions as a land-grant university. K-State is the only university with a presence in all 105 Kansas counties, with K-State Extension serving as the hub and infrastructure for this statewide network. Historically, Extension has focused on extending knowledge from the university to communities. Today, and in the future, Extension is about partnerships. We must push ourselves to reimagine how university resources and tremendous assets like Extension align with rapidly evolving community needs, with a focus on being relevant in the future based on these needs, while more deeply integrating engagement-focused elements like Extension across the fabric of the institution.

Engagement and Extension have already become a measurable force for K-State's land-grant mission. Extension was elevated to central administration to function as a true partnership engine, bringing in new health and community initiatives and integrating the university's cultural assets — the Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art, McCain Auditorium and K-State Gardens — and military affairs more fully into statewide engagement work. The All Things Kansas platform now offers more than 30,000 data layers and 120-plus integrated data sources to support community planning and workforce decisions across the state. Presidential Engagement Fellows have been deployed to strengthen regional relationships and institutional visibility. The Scholarly Engagement Guide has been launched to help faculty document and advance engaged scholarship. K-State co-hosts the Governor's Water Conference, which draws 500 or more participants annually. Finally, the Rural Health Transformation initiative has helped secure \$221.9 million in federal support for rural care innovation across Kansas. Taken together, these efforts demonstrate that engagement at K-State is a core institutional function measured by real outcomes.

## Bold ideas

- **Elevate our relationship in all 105 counties** as the university's primary connector to drive business development, partnerships and job creation in the state
- **Maximize the impact of engagement as a universitywide function** to transform how K-State connects with communities and external stakeholders

## Key priorities

### Establish a clear and consistent university position on engagement

- Develop a shared definition for the spectrum of engagement activities across the university's land-grant mission
- Recognize and reward engaged research, teaching and service in all faculty and staff evaluations
- Create interdisciplinary innovation funding pool with matching funds for engagement grants
- Establish central, physical spaces and purpose-driven facilities for interacting with the community, engaging in applied work and embracing interdisciplinary engagement activities
- Develop an engagement fellows model inclusive of faculty, staff and Extension specialists and agents
- Support major cross-college, transdisciplinary collaborations founded on the integration of service, education, research and economic development
- Sustain and expand the Presidential Engagement Fellows program to strengthen K-State's regional relationships, elevate institutional visibility across Kansas and build the trust-based partnerships that drive community collaboration and investment
- Integrate engagement data with unit and college institutional data to create a shared, consistent system for tracking, communicating and building accountability around engagement outcomes

### Fully integrate engagement across all facets of the university

- Establish the Office of Engagement as the university's central unit for coordinating engagement activities
- Develop an engagement ambassador model to coordinate engagement activities across colleges
- Design a university engagement training academy for faculty, staff and community partners
- Establish engagement parks and experiment stations for connecting faculty and staff with the surrounding community
- Establish off-campus engagement satellite locations to meet community partners
- Leverage K-State's cultural assets as active engagement platforms — including McCain's artist residencies, school programming, community workshops and partnership with the Manhattan Symphony Orchestra as well as the Beach Museum of Art's BeachLAB initiative — using art as a catalyst for interdisciplinary dialogue and discovery across campus
- Support K-State Libraries as a statewide engagement asset, opening the university's data, scholarship and collections to communities in all 105 counties through interlibrary loan and open-access stewardship
- Deepen the partnership with the Kansas Health Foundation and aligned organizations to support the Rural Health Transformation initiative, addressing community needs and integrating health-focused engagement priorities across community-based programming
- Strengthen K-State's Military and Veterans Affairs engagement footprint and grow academic, clinical and workforce partnerships with installations such as Fort Riley



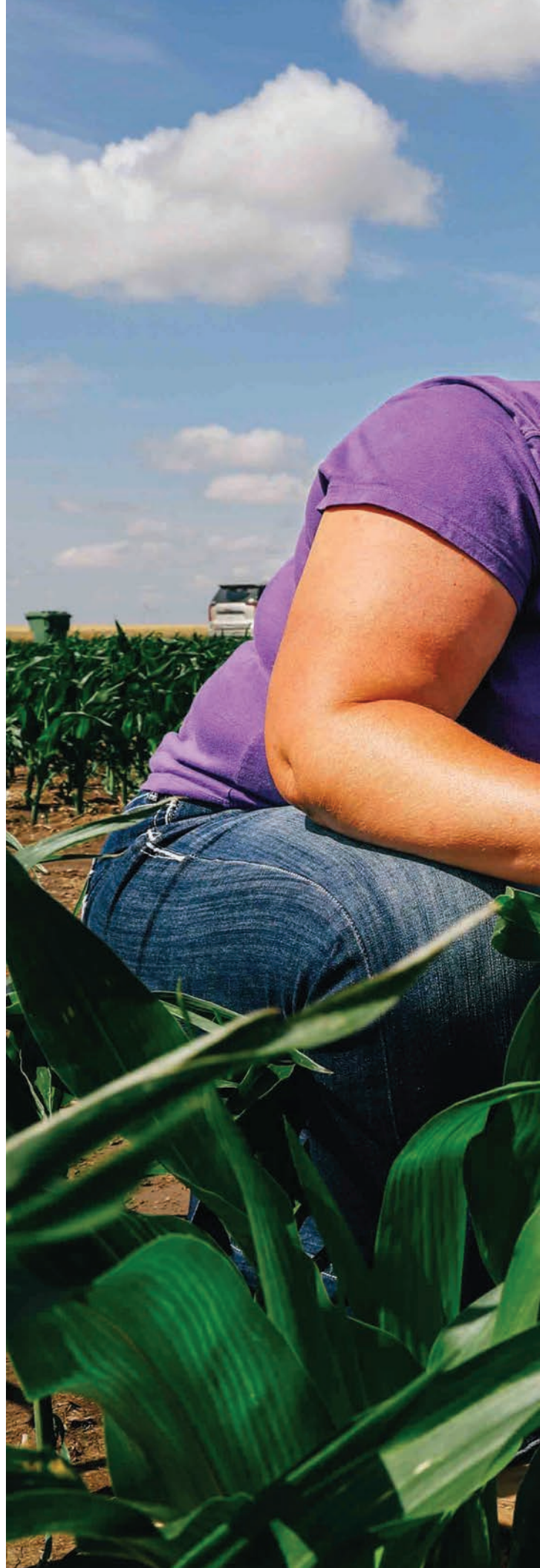


### Elevate K-State's community, economic and tribal connections, and impact across all 105 counties

- Reenvision and integrate K-State Extension as a university-level priority
- Leverage Extension to spur statewide, community-level broadband adoption, end-user accessibility and workforce development
- Establish a model for linking or reconnecting K-State students with their communities through Extension
- Leverage Extension to connect communities with expertise and programming at other Kansas Board of Regents institutions
- Expand and enhance the All Things Kansas platform — currently offering 30,000-plus data layers and more than 120 integrated sources — as the university's primary tool for empowering community leaders, local governments and workforce planners across all 105 counties with actionable, data-driven insights
- Scale the Rural Health Transformation initiative by expanding the deployment of community health workers, agricultural health specialists and "Food is Medicine" clinical integration to improve health outcomes and access across rural Kansas
- Sustain and grow high-profile statewide convenings — including the Governor's Water Conference, which draws more than 500 participants annually — as platforms that position K-State as the convener of critical conversations on Kansas' most pressing challenges and opportunities

### Imperative alignment

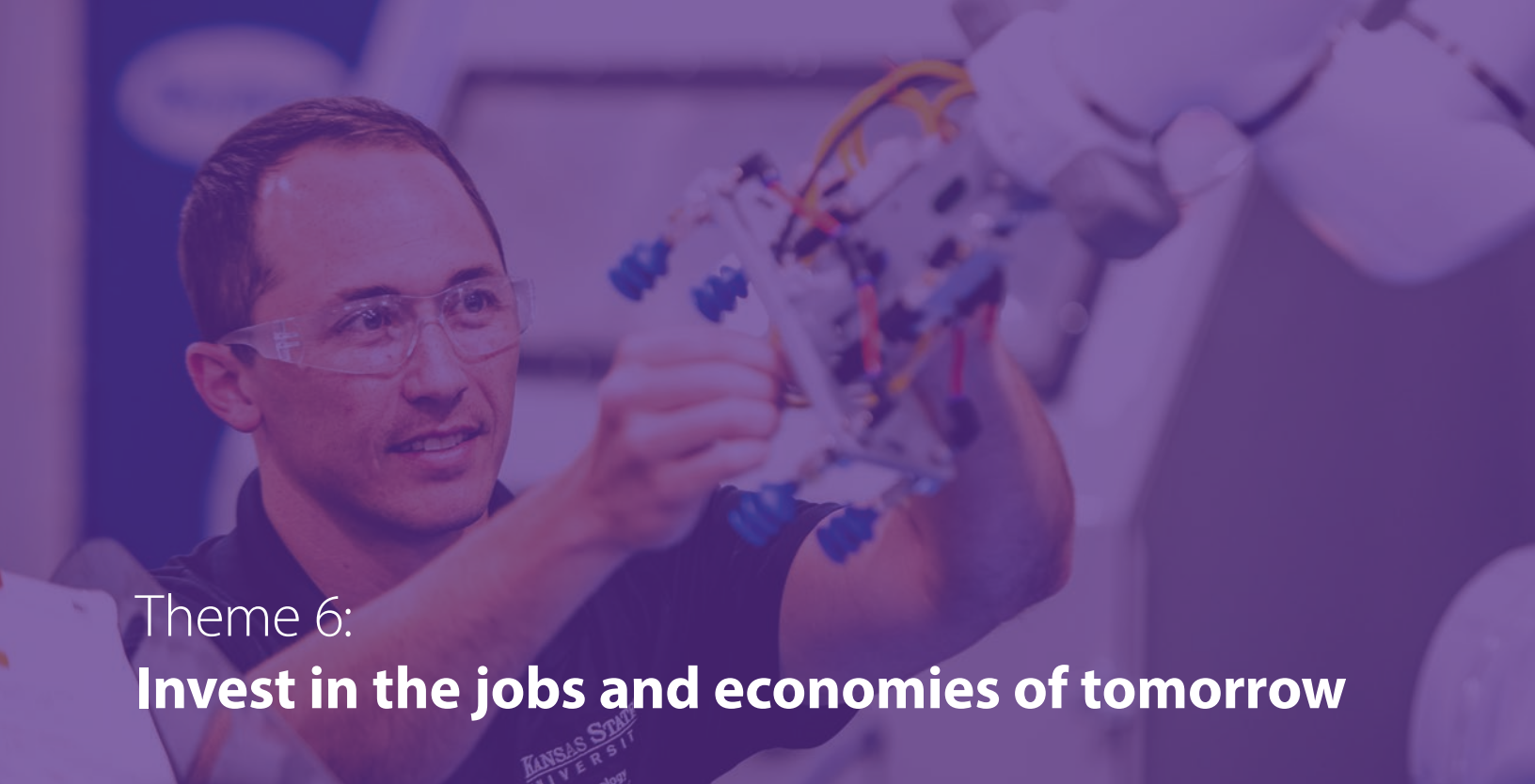
- **Imperative 3:** Provide every degree-seeking student with applied learning experiences
- **Imperative 4:** Grow research expenditures to \$350 million annually and faculty-initiated competitive awards to \$300 million annually
- **Imperative 5:** Nimble and proactively meet the needs of learners, employers and society
- **Imperative 6:** Build partnerships at all levels of K-State
- **Imperative 7:** Be a positive force for the Kansas economy
- **Imperative 8:** Focus on operational excellence and being One K-State in all we do









A man wearing safety glasses and a dark shirt is working on a circuit board. He is holding a small component with his fingers. The background is blurred, showing other people and equipment in a laboratory or workshop setting. The entire image has a purple tint.

## Theme 6: Invest in the jobs and economies of tomorrow

We must focus on business development, job creation and unique partnerships that drive economic prosperity, impact and growth in Kansas and beyond.

Economic impact has always been a key part of K-State's traditional land-grant mission. As we adapt our focus toward becoming a leading next-generation land-grant university, we must lead and drive the dialogue with our partners to create economic impact while continually aligning our institution with the rapidly evolving needs and demands of the communities and economies we support, as well as the opportunities our university can help create to improve social mobility for K-State students and Kansans across the state.

This concept of economic prosperity and impact connects to all facets of our institution. We will adapt curricula and remove unnecessary hurdles that inhibit our ability to nimbly respond to employer demands for skills and experiences. We will firmly integrate this focus on workforce preparedness and economic impact into our universitywide focus on applied learning, supplying employers with educated and prepared graduates who meet workforce needs. We will reimagine existing models like the K-State Career Center as a vital conduit for aligning employer needs and student preparedness in real time. We will empower our colleges, units, faculty and staff with the skills, connections and support they need to form, maintain and scale our community and industry partners — recognizing that our partners don't see us as individual colleges or campuses but as One K-State. We will clarify, streamline and elevate our structures and processes to more efficiently connect our work

and impact to surrounding communities and economies, from sponsored research to commercialization. And we will work with our many university partners to accelerate how we leverage our campus footprint to form public-private partnerships that create clear, tangible value for our institution.

**Our end goal — making it clear to our partners, the state, the nation and the world that K-State is ready to lead the charge in building a vibrant economy for present and future generations.**

Foundational work is already delivering results. Our economic development activity in FY25 generated over 1,100 jobs created or retained, 662 businesses established or expanded and \$12.7 million in matching funds, loans or equity leveraged — concrete proof that K-State's statewide presence translates into economic impact. The K-State Industry Partnership Network has been launched to create a structured platform for collaboration, information sharing and strategic relationship management with key industry partners. Two new interdisciplinary institutes — the Institute for Community Health and Well-being and the Institute for Financial Education and Prosperity — are now operational, anchoring K-State's cross-university response to major societal challenges. These investments are building the institutional agility needed to sustain K-State's economic leadership role through 2030 and beyond.

## Bold ideas

- **Reimagine our model for economic partnerships** and industry engagement
- **Streamline and resource the structures** to make it easy to do business with K-State
- **Establish a universitywide focus on social mobility** and economic impact
- **Establish large-scale public-private partnerships** spanning multiple university programs, units and areas focused on generating significant economic value and impact
- **Scale undergraduate career development** through a universitywide ecosystem reliant on universal career milestones and embedding content and engagement in the curriculum

## Key priorities

### Embrace economic engagement as an institutional imperative

- Encourage all colleges and units to develop annual goals focused on driving economic impact
  - Establish university-level sector advisory councils to connect changing economic factors and industry needs with the broader university
  - Build awareness among stakeholders, communities and prospective partners that K-State is open for business
  - Regularly measure and improve the economic impact K-State has on the state of Kansas
  - Establish an economic impact center or institute focused on coordinating across the university to mobilize solutions that align with the state's industry and economic needs
- Track and report K-State's economic footprint through annual rigorous measurement, including the metrics established through economic development activity — jobs created or retained, businesses established or expanded, and capital leveraged — and future economic impact studies — and use these results to communicate K-State's value to Kansas legislators, partners and communities
  - Build out K-State's portfolio of interdisciplinary institutes — including the Institute for Community Health and Well-being and the Institute for Financial Education and Prosperity — as anchors for cross-university, community-embedded responses to Kansas' major economic and social challenges

### Establish systems, structures and culture for connecting partners with talent and innovation

- Establish a central university structure for industry and corporate engagement, with designated point people embedded in each college and unit charged with both individual and interdisciplinary connections
- Streamline new academic program development pathways to address urgent or significant industry talent needs
- Deploy ongoing academic portfolio analysis to systematically identify high-demand program opportunities, direct resources toward growth areas and sunset low-enrollment offerings — ensuring K-State's academic portfolio remains aligned with the evolving talent needs of Kansas employers and industries
- Advance universal career milestones as a vital foundation for undergraduate student career development across all colleges and majors
- Realign the K-State Career Center as consultation partners in developing embedded career readiness curricular content and initiatives
- Streamline and enhance pathways to intellectual property commercialization





- Scale the K-State Industry Partnership Network as the university's structured platform for corporate collaboration, providing consistent relationship management, information sharing and strategic alignment with key industry partners across Kansas and targeted out-of-state markets, including Dallas/Fort Worth, Denver and Chicago
- Build new or repurpose existing facilities as integrated, modern environments focused on interdisciplinary research and collaborations with industry partners
- Establish a model for industry-focused mini-sabbaticals for faculty and professional staff

#### **Integrate applied learning into all majors, programs and experiences**

- Identify ways to intentionally integrate applied learning opportunities across the university and create seamless pathways for employer engagement
- Hire faculty and staff with specific skills and knowledge aligned with economic engagement strategies and emerging sectors
- Establish interdisciplinary academic clusters in coordination with industry partners based on industry and employment needs
- Scale industry-aligned microcredentials, professional certificates and flexible learning formats that allow working professionals and adult learners to upskill or reskill without disrupting employment — broadening K-State's economic impact beyond traditional degree programs
- Expand engineering capstone, physician assistant clinical rotation and applied research partnerships with Fort Riley and other military installations — connecting K-State students with real-world workforce challenges while building durable, high-value economic and research relationships with the defense sector

### **Imperative alignment**

- **Imperative 3:** Provide every degree-seeking student with applied learning experiences
- **Imperative 5:** Nimble and proactively meet the needs of learners, employers and society
- **Imperative 6:** Build partnerships at all levels of K-State
- **Imperative 7:** Be a positive force for the Kansas economy
- **Imperative 8:** Focus on operational excellence and being One K-State in all we do
- **Imperative 10:** Grow total, combined fundraising to \$2 billion by 2030











## Our critical enablers: Pursue operational excellence as One K-State

K-State inspires affinity, passion and support among so many who come into contact with our institution. That connection is even stronger for those closest to K-State — the faculty, staff and students of our internal community.

We must empower this community to do their work as efficiently and effectively as possible while enhancing our faculty and staff's ability to continue adding value to the university and those we serve. This involves taking a close and continuous look at our foundational infrastructure, structures and business processes to identify opportunities for streamlining, modernizing and integrating how we do our work in a way that better positions us to fulfill our mission. It also involves assessing and investing in our facilities across the university, providing the best possible spaces that allow our K-State community to excel in their work and positioning our physical infrastructure as an asset for recruiting and retaining faculty, staff and students. We will elevate this focus in the same context as our other strategic plan themes and priorities, recognizing the crucial role operational excellence will play in supporting and powering many of our other aspirations.

We must continually recognize we are all part of one university, adopting a culture of One K-State across our institution. One K-State is not a slogan or advertising campaign. It is a mindset and cultural imperative that all people and parts of our institution must adopt if we are to become a leading next-generation land-grant university — recognizing we are better together than operating singularly or apart, despite our decentralized environment. This also means holding one another accountable for excellence, quality and performance across all we do. We strive for nothing less. In some cases, it may lead to uncomfortable or difficult conversations,

or establishing rewards and recognition structures that acknowledge excellence among our K-State community. In others, it may mean changing the way we do business to better serve our students, workforce and surrounding communities. In all instances, we will communicate and engage our K-State community with openness and transparency as we navigate change together.

Underpinning all of this is a principle that must guide how we operate: Trust is the critical infrastructure of a land-grant university. We tend to think of infrastructure as physical — roads, broadband, labs, buildings. By building trust as the foundational infrastructure, everything else becomes possible. The land-grant model was built on a social contract: public investment in exchange for public benefit. When distance grows between the work we do and the communities we serve, that contract weakens. For K-State, operational excellence is not merely about efficiency. It is about operating in a way that makes our relevance visible, building trust by creating outcomes that can be seen, felt and experienced, and by being present and responsive when our communities need us most.

We must also aggressively and consistently tell our K-State story externally in a way that underpins our growth and elevates our successes — asking ourselves at all times, in a way that guides all decisions, "What is best for K-State?" This means clearly defining our K-State brand and establishing a cohesive foundation that clearly articulates the promise

behind this brand — both what we expect of ourselves and what our audiences can expect from us. It must also include our colleges, units and the entire K-State community uniting around this shared brand platform through which our communications, marketing and outreach activities reinforce one another at every opportunity.

As we move forward in implementing this strategic plan, additional planning and new investments must occur given the role critical enablers like facilities, technology, systems, processes, policies and communications will serve in catalyzing our future vision. This work will yield specific strategies and constantly evolve in the future, demanding that our focus in operational excellence and continuous improvement is similarly flexible and adaptive to future change.

K-State has already demonstrated what operational excellence looks like in practice. Workflow modernization digitized and automated 30 university academic processes, reducing average processing times by 91% — from five days to 11 hours — and reclaiming approximately 49,000 staff hours, the equivalent of nearly eight years of staff capacity returned to the institution. On the facilities side, the university eliminated approximately \$166 million in deferred maintenance since launching the Next-Gen K-State plan and invested more than \$205 million in facilities through new construction and renovation as it aggressively pursues its KBOR-approved Campus Master Plan. The budget transformation effort, with committees focused on academic affairs, research, engagement, athletics and operational excellence, will soon be completed, opening doors to a more efficient and effective allocation of our resources. These outcomes illustrate the compounding value of treating operational infrastructure as a strategic asset.

## Our unifying focus

Operate as One K-State — working efficiently, effectively and collaboratively to support one another in everything we do.

## How we will get there

- Establish a culture of continuous improvement and excellence across operations
- Develop detailed operational excellence plans that establish priorities, goals and strategies for technology, human resources, risk and safety, communications, and other key operational functions
- Implement standardized foundational processes that support our people
- Implement consistent, modern policies that help inform effective and efficient decision-making across the university
- Establish coordinated, integrated systems to do our core university work
- Establish and implement a universitywide cohesive brand and communications strategy with supporting structures, policies and resources in alignment with the university strategic plan
- Scale workflow modernization and digital automation to extend efficiency gains across additional academic and administrative functions universitywide
- Double the campus physical security footprint in 2026 — expanding access control to seven to 10 additional buildings, including Hale Library, and continuing the rollout of the Verkada camera network — to protect the K-State community, safeguard research assets and meet the security expectations of an R1 institution
- Execute the multi-phase budget transformation effort to ensure sustained, strategic investment in technology, research capacity, athletics sustainability and competitive compensation for faculty, staff and graduate students
- Implement the completed compensation study in full across three fiscal years — bringing all employees to market-rate salaries, resolving wage compression and establishing transparent, equitable compensation structures that position K-State as an employer of choice in Kansas and higher education
- Advance the Campus Master Plan's philanthropic component — including the \$24.2 million philanthropic target for Anderson Hall exterior restoration — by aligning capital campaign priorities with the master plan's investment roadmap and engaging donors in the physical transformation of K-State's campus
- Deploy AI-powered tools for fundraising — including marketing automation, a virtual engagement officer for portfolio management, and machine learning for portfolio quality analysis and donor churn reduction — to increase the productivity and effectiveness of K-State's development operation at scale



# Strategic plan measures of success

The next-generation land-grant university is measured by outcomes — not only by what it produces internally, but by the difference it makes in the lives of the people and communities it serves.

As we move together toward that standard, we must steadfastly measure our success, recognize our accomplishments, and monitor and report our progress in ways that are visible beyond metrics, charts and graphics — outcomes that communities can experience and feel. This starts with an institutional commitment to holding ourselves accountable to this plan and building a sustainable framework that extends this mindset across K-State.

The strategic imperatives outlined in this plan provide the foundation for our commitment and define what we must do to achieve our vision. The following goals and targets guide implementation. In some cases, we must first establish a baseline to measure progress; in others, we will focus on year-to-year improvement, with targets becoming more precise as data and trends are better understood. We will review progress annually alongside our broader strategic plan, adjusting for unexpected challenges and opportunities.

These key metrics will be important measures, but not the only measures, of our success. Additional university metrics to track progress toward each strategic imperative, theme area and strategic priority will be identified and utilized for internal tracking, reporting and ongoing decision making as we implement our plan. Colleges, departments, units, affiliates, task forces and others will also develop their own plans that support these university-level targets with corresponding activities, outcomes and metrics — recognizing that we all have an important role to play in moving K-State forward and achieving our vision together.

We will also work to ensure this plan and related measures of success support and reinforce the goals the Kansas Board of Regents has established to measure and guide the success of higher education across the state — recognizing the progress we make as an institution will have even greater impact on the prosperity of Kansas through our continued alignment and partnership.

| Imperative alignment                                        | Success metric                             | 2025 Target                                                                                                                                                                                             | 2030 Target                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Imperative 1:</b> Grow enrollment                        | Student and learner enrollment             | 27,000 total students and learners <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>20,500–21,500 degree-seeking and credit-bearing students</li><li>6,200–6,500 alternative credential-seeking learners</li></ul> | 36,200 total students and learners <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>23,000 degree-seeking and credit-bearing undergraduate and graduate students</li><li>10,000 alternative credential-seeking learners</li><li>3,200 community-engaged learners</li></ul> |
| <b>Imperative 2:</b> Improve retention and graduation rates | First-year retention rate                  | 90% overall                                                                                                                                                                                             | 90% overall                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Imperative 2:</b> Improve retention and graduation rates | Second-year retention rate                 | 80% overall                                                                                                                                                                                             | 81% overall                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Imperative 2:</b> Improve retention and graduation rates | Four-year graduation rate                  | 50% overall                                                                                                                                                                                             | 57% overall                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Imperative 2:</b> Improve retention and graduation rates | Six-year graduation rate                   | 70% overall                                                                                                                                                                                             | 75% overall                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Imperative 2:</b> Improve retention and graduation rates | Transfer student first-year retention rate | 82% overall                                                                                                                                                                                             | 85% overall                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

| Imperative alignment                                                                          | Success metric                                                                                                                                                                      | 2025 Target                                                                    | 2030 Target                                                                   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Imperative 3:</b> Provide every degree-seeking student with applied learning experiences   | Applied learning experiences for all students                                                                                                                                       | All students have access to applied learning experiences                       | 100% participation rate (mandatory for all undergraduate students)            |
| <b>Imperative 4:</b> Grow research expenditures                                               | Research expenditures                                                                                                                                                               | \$250 million annually                                                         | \$350 million annually                                                        |
| <b>Imperative 4:</b> Grow faculty-initiated competitive awards                                | Faculty-initiated competitive awards                                                                                                                                                | \$210 million annually                                                         | \$300 million annually                                                        |
| <b>Imperative 4:</b> Grow our annual invention disclosures                                    | Number of new invention disclosures received per year                                                                                                                               |                                                                                | 80                                                                            |
| <b>Imperative 5:</b> Nimbly and proactively meet the needs of learners, employers and society | Total degrees and credentials awarded by type                                                                                                                                       | Positive growth (targets to be determined)                                     | 4,000 undergraduate, 1,750 graduate                                           |
| <b>Imperative 5:</b> Nimbly and proactively meet the needs of learners, employers and society | Student employment rate in Kansas and Missouri six months post-graduation                                                                                                           |                                                                                | Exceeds 68%                                                                   |
| <b>Imperative 5:</b> Nimbly and proactively meet the needs of learners, employers and society | Median earnings five years post-graduation                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                | Exceeds \$70,000                                                              |
| <b>Imperative 6:</b> Build partnerships at all levels of K-State                              | University engagement partnerships collaborating with an external academic, community/nonprofit, industry or international partner that leads to a measurable, impactful engagement | Establish baseline across the university                                       | 550 total new partnerships per year                                           |
| <b>Imperative 7:</b> Be a positive force for the Kansas economy                               | Annual Extension educational contacts (direct)                                                                                                                                      | Direct 641,000 (2.5% annual growth), Indirect 5.9 million (2.5% annual growth) | Direct 1.16 million                                                           |
| <b>Imperative 7:</b> Be a positive force for the Kansas economy                               | Annual intellectual property licensing revenue                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                | Exceeds \$3.5 million per year                                                |
| <b>Imperative 7:</b> Be a positive force for the Kansas economy                               | Overall economic impact on the state (annually)                                                                                                                                     | Establish baseline across the university                                       | \$3.5 billion per year                                                        |
| <b>Imperative 8:</b> Focus on operational excellence and being One K-State                    | Total investment in facilities                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                | \$700 million cumulative (FY22-30)                                            |
| <b>Imperative 9:</b> Become an employer of choice in Kansas and higher education              | Faculty, staff and graduate student compensation compared to peers                                                                                                                  | Establish baseline, positive growth                                            | 100% of faculty and staff paid within appropriate market-aligned pay ranges   |
| <b>Imperative 10:</b> Grow total, combined fundraising to \$2 billion by 2030                 | Total philanthropic giving                                                                                                                                                          | \$210 million annually (FY25-26)                                               | \$2 billion cumulative (FY21-22 to FY29-30), \$250 million annually (FY29-30) |



# Our future

The future of K-State is a bright one — filled with opportunity, potential and promise.

There is tremendous opportunity and collective will to align our K-State community around a shared vision and the strategies we will accomplish together. That much was clear in the thousands of engagements that informed the development of this strategic plan. As we move forward in implementing this plan, achieving our vision of becoming a next-generation land-grant university, we must continually engage this same community in our work — underscored by a mindset of One K-State in all we do.

As we reach the halfway point of this plan, the evidence of our progress is clear. Total enrollment has reached 21,213 students — the highest in a decade — and our four-year graduation rate has already exceeded our original 2030 goal. Research funding has grown to \$281 million in total extramural expenditures, prompting us to raise our research targets accordingly. Philanthropic giving has surpassed \$1.1 billion cumulatively, placing us well ahead of pace toward the \$2 billion goal. We have invested more than \$200 million in facilities and launched the One K-State Fund, which has committed more than \$19 million to strategic initiatives since FY24. These results confirm that the framework we set in motion is working — and that our ambition for the years ahead should be equal to the momentum we have built.

This plan serves as a guide for how we deploy resources and make investments in our learners, our people, our infrastructure and our communities. As we accelerate our growth and impact in working toward our university imperatives, we expect to generate additional resources that can be redeployed directly back into our strategic plan, effecting a cycle of continued growth and mission-aligned impact. Our momentum is real and accelerating. The task ahead is to maintain that trajectory, build on the systems and partnerships we have established and pursue the second half of this plan with the same urgency and ambition that has defined our first years of execution.

We also recognize there are many changes outlined in this plan that impact the way we have always done things — from policies and procedures to structures and culture. These changes will require a clear focus on change management and helping our K-State community navigate from our current environment to an even brighter future. And, as we implement change, we must take great care to not lose the essence of K-State and what makes this university so special to all those who hold it dear. We will communicate our progress often and with transparency, highlighting successes and sharing data that clearly connects back to our strategic imperatives and priorities and builds momentum across our K-State community.

This is a plan that no one individual or team at K-State can implement alone. It requires our entire community to serve as ambassadors to move it forward and hold each other accountable for its progress. Colleges, departments and units are responsible for developing their own strategic plans that align with priorities contained in our university-level plan and that clearly help advance our strategic imperatives. We also know that our internal K-State community cannot achieve our vision alone. For a next-generation land-grant, partnership is the strategy, the defining operating principle of how we work. The problems we are solving — food safety, rural health, energy production, climate resilience, biosecurity and workforce pipelines — cannot be solved by any one institution. We are committed to building multi-state consortia, public-private partnerships, shared data systems and cooperative networks that allow communities and institutions to grow together. This includes partnerships with other universities and colleges throughout our state and beyond, with the understanding that solutions tested under real constraints here in Kansas are the ones that can scale to meet challenges across the world.

Most importantly, we must be prepared to adapt as conditions change. Higher education and the world around us are constantly evolving, as are the needs of the learners, communities and economies we support. We are constantly welcoming new learners to our university who may have different needs or aspirations than those who came before them. We are committed to making our value proposition clear to all who enter our doors or engage with our community and delivering on that promise.

**If the Morrill Act was written today, we believe it would call on us to deliver speed with rigor, relevance with independence and measurable public benefit. We will respond to emerging challenges quickly while maintaining the credibility and integrity that define our work; stay deeply connected to the needs of communities we serve while being willing to tell the truth, even when it's hard; and measure our success in the real lives we've made better and the communities we've made stronger. That is the charge we accept. Together, as One K-State.**





# Appendix: Peer and aspirational institutions

The process that informed the development of this strategic plan was designed to be heavily informed by data, analysis and broad engagement with the K-State community – informed and guided by an advisory committee consisting of students, faculty, staff, administrators, governance council leaders and alumni dedicated to envisioning the future of Kansas State University.

Through this process, university leaders and the strategic planning advisory committee utilized a comparison set of peer institutions and specific criteria to allow for comparative analysis and benchmarking of institutional performance. Additionally, these same leaders utilized a set of aspirational institutions based on similar criteria to inform future growth and performance targets.

The analysis was informed by current national data from the U.S. Department of Education's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), National Science Foundation data on research expenditures, and other publicly available institutional or aggregate datasets. It included consideration of key institutional factors connected to the K-State operating environment and appropriate benchmarks, such as K-State's Carnegie R1 research classification and status as a land-grant institution, which carries unique programmatic offerings — like K-State Extension and faculty with Extension appointments — and influences other institutional outputs. It also involved reviewing other institutions that may carry similar designations but offer programs or infrastructure that significantly alters their respective outputs in areas such as research expenditures or student enrollment (i.e., universities with a medical or law school).

The university submitted these peer and aspirational institutions to the Kansas Board of Regents and received approval to use them as the formal comparison set for institutional benchmarking — establishing the market and criteria upon which K-State should be compared today, as well as the targets it should pursue and be measured against as the university implements its strategic plan through 2030.

## Peer institutions

- Auburn University
- Iowa State University
- Oklahoma State University
- University of Arkansas – Fayetteville
- University of Nebraska – Lincoln

## Aspirational institutions

- Colorado State University
- Louisiana State University
- North Carolina State University
- Oregon State University
- Purdue University
- University of Georgia

## Land Acknowledgement

As the first land-grant institution established under the 1862 Morrill Act, Kansas State University begins and continues through Indigenous contexts. We acknowledge that the state is home to many Indigenous nations, including the Kaw, Osage and Pawnee, among others. The name "Kansas" itself originates from the Kaw word "Kaa'ze," meaning people of the south wind. Kansas is currently home to four federally recognized nations, the Prairie Band Potawatomi, the Kickapoo Tribe of Kansas, the Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska and the Sac and Fox Nation of Missouri in Kansas and Nebraska. Through ongoing partnerships, education initiatives and community collaboration, Kansas State University strives to build relationships with these sovereign nations grounded in reciprocity, responsibility and respect.







