



Next-Gen K-State strategic plan

External Engagement Office

Executive Vice President for External Engagement and Chief of Staff

KANSAS STATE

U N I V E R S I T Y

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Introduction

The External Engagement Office is responsible for guiding the strategy and managing the operations for external engagement throughout the University system.

Our team is composed of university units that manage primary engagement functions at Kansas State University. These units include:

- Mariana Kistler Beach Museum of Art
- Chief of Staff
- Digital Agriculture and Advanced Analytics Institute
- Division of Communications and Marketing
- Kansas Water Institute
- K-State 105
- K-State Extension
- K-State Gardens
- McCain Auditorium
- Corporate Engagement
- University Engagement
- Government Relations
- Military and Veterans Affairs

Planning Process

This plan was developed through a collaborative process that involved each of the units that report to the External Engagement Office. Those units touch a large swath of Kansas State University. Our process started by reviewing all the K-State College plans to help determine how our unit could best align, support, and innovate on the goals of each College. Then, we employed a four-month process to generate our plan that included the following steps:

1. Generated a priorities draft document with the Executive Vice President / Chief of Staff.
2. Discussed and edited the priorities into three main goals with directors and key representatives from every reporting unit.
3. Conducted a SWOT analysis of the External Engagement Office with directors and key representatives from every reporting unit.
4. Organized working groups to focus on each of the three main goals with representatives from the reporting units. Each working group had two co-leads that were chosen based on their expertise and reporting unit's focus. The working group members were selected from relevant reporting units, which included employees who work within a unit.
5. Established strategies, actions, and outcomes for each goal with the working groups.
6. Presented strategies of each working group to unit leads during the External Engagement Office monthly meeting.
7. Synthesized material from each working group into a draft plan submitted in December 2024.

8. Charged each unit to create action plans to drive progress on the three primary goals by August 2025
9. Revised and submitted final plan (April 2025 & June 2025)

External Engagement Office

Mission:

Integrating engagement throughout the University that contributes to the prosperity of all 105 Kansas counties and solves problems for our state, nation, and world.

Vision:

Kansas State University will lead the nation as a next-generation land-grant university – setting the standard for inspiring learning, creativity, discovery, and engagement that positively impacts society and 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 them 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 legacy.

Goals

This plan outlines the goals and strategies that will guide our team's efforts from now until 2030. It is designed to advance university engagement in ways that align with priorities identified by the University's Next Gen Strategic Plan.

Goal 1: K-State is a fully engaged Land Grant University

Goal 2: One K-State

Goal 3: K-State is Open for Business

Goal 1 K-State is a fully engaged Land Grant University

A fully engaged land-grant university invites all university units to extend the university to communities and businesses. We do this by partnering with communities, industries, and other stakeholders to increase educational access, boost economic development, and develop workforce skills.

1.1 Strategy: Leverage university units to address community & industry needs

This strategy involves connecting academic units to communities and industries that seek assistance. The K-State Extension system, with a physical presence in all 105 counties, will assist in assessing local needs and connecting them to university resources. In addition, a university wide “engagement council” will be established to develop engagement capacity across the University including athletics, alumni, and the foundation. Involving all university units includes leveraging K-State assets, for instance, the Beach Museum and McCain Auditorium, to cultivate culture and community through the performing arts and humanities.

1.2 Strategy: Reward engagement

This strategy focuses on making engagement a core duty in various University job descriptions. It also includes recognizing engaged scholarship as work that counts for faculty annual review, promotion, and tenure. Rewarding engagement helps to recruit and retain highly performing employees who want to make a broader impact with their work.

1.3 Strategy: Document and publicize engaged work

This strategy includes creating an internal database for colleagues to see the engaged research/teaching/extension at Kansas State University. This also includes an externally facing faculty profile system that displays research expertise and partnerships. This system enables the public and potential partners to find the expertise they are seeking. It also serves to connect K-State colleagues who are working on related research or geographical areas.

Outcomes:

- Every K-State unit participates in addressing community and industry needs.
- K-State Extension is the go-to partner to address community needs in Kansas.
- All K-State faculty and staff have an opportunity for an expressed commitment to engagement in their position descriptions, performance reviews, promotion, and tenure documents.

Timeline:

2025: Create internal system to track engaged work annually for all faculty

2026: Establish engagement council with 200 active K-State employees

2026: Establish K-State Arts and Humanities corridor on Manhattan campus as a cultural and community asset

2025-2027: Recognize and reward engaged scholarship in academic units' annual review and promotion/tenure documents.

2027-2030: Create at least one initiative with every K-State academic unit that involves K-State Extension working with KS communities.

2027-2030: Establish a significant K-State involved project/partnership located in every KS county that is in addition to current local K-State Extension efforts.

Goal 2: One K-State

The Next-Gen K-State strategic plan emphasizes operating as One K-State, representing a cultural mindset of unity and collaboration across the entire institution rather than just a slogan to achieve excellence as a next-generation land-grant university despite decentralization. One K-State allows us to achieve greater results working together as compared to working as individual units.

2.1 Strategy: Place the K-State brand first

This strategy centers on providing consistent brand guidelines. This will include distributing comprehensive brand and communications guidelines and support training to promote awareness and adoption of the shared brand platform. It also involves identifying One K-State and Brand ambassadors or champions to share positive and diverse examples of culture and material identity adoption.

2.2 Strategy: Administer Engagement & Extension at the University level

This strategy centralizes the administration of units that focus primarily on external engagement. It also includes opening the Extension system to be available to all academic units. Doing this will deliver more of the University to serve Kansans and beyond.

2.3 Strategy: Generate a One K-State culture and implement process changes

This strategy focuses on the mindset and processes that are needed to implement structural change. This includes developing and supporting inter-disciplinary work through new institutes to develop collaborative research, teaching, and engagement opportunities across disciplines aligned with the K-State NextGen Opportunity Agenda. It also involves identifying and developing opportunities for improved standardized foundational processes and documenting the workflow. In addition, there will be active participation from the EVP/COS team in the development of the K-State campus master plan. These structures and processes work to implement and sustain the Next Gen strategies.

Outcomes:

- Reduction in the number of inconsistencies in brand standards
- Higher participation from academic units in interdisciplinary initiatives
- External acknowledgment of awards or publications highlighting successful interdisciplinary work.
- K-State is not just known as the Manhattan campus; rather, it is known as three campuses and 105 community access points via Extension.

Timeline:

2025: Create and organize K-State brand ambassadors

2025: Establish organizational structures that further integrate K-State Extension and the Office of Engagement.

2025-2026: Stand up two new inter-disciplinary institutes

2025-2027: Provide organizational structure and funding model to sustain inter-disciplinary institutes

2027-2030: Communications and processes are in place for the public and partners to experience and know K-State as one University

Goal 3: K-State is Open for Business

A next-generation land-grant university actively cultivates new partnerships by understanding and swiftly addressing the needs of industry and community partners. These partnerships yield healthier communities and more prosperous businesses.

3.1 Strategy: One “purple” door for partners

This strategy is focused on creating a one-stop place for industry and communities to access Kansas State University. We will work to develop deeper partnerships that have multiple touch points and outcomes that are mutually beneficial for partners and the University. We will establish clear processes for routing external contact requests. It also involves aligning communications externally to have a clear message for all partners. This will increase the number and quality of K-State partnerships.

3.2 Strategy: Educate external entities on the University’s value proposition and outcomes

This strategy focuses on increasing the visibility of Kansas State University so that we are out front and top of mind. This includes a presence at community and state-wide events, sponsorships, and involvement with industry events. We will use various communication strategies to achieve message saturation regarding the value proposition

of K-State. This strategy enhances the reputation and value of Kansas State University for Kansans and beyond.

Outcomes:

- People know how to work with K-State
- Deeper partnerships with key industry partners
- Increased jobs and investment through economic development initiatives
- Increase the number of people who have K-State on-campus immersion experiences

Timeline:

2025: Build and develop a cohesive team that includes corporate engagement, economic development, and Research Foundation co-located in Edge District office

2026: Establish Partnership CRM shared across multiple units

2025-2027: Brand One-Purple Door that public partners know and understand

2025-2027: Scale economic development initiatives to successfully deliver on K-State's economic prosperity plan

2027-2030: Deep industry partnerships with a select group of companies