

Executive Position Profile

Vice President for Engagement and Extension

2026

KANSAS STATE
UNIVERSITY®



Quick Facts

Founded in **1863**

Led by **President Richard Linton**

21,200+ students

4,550 full-time faculty and staff

250+ undergraduate academic programs

Fight Song: **Wildcat Victory**

Mascot: **Willie the Wildcat**

School Color: **Royal Purple**

Big 12 athletic conference

ABOUT KSU

Founded in 1863 as the nation's first operational land-grant university, Kansas State University has grown into a comprehensive research university with more than 21,200 students, 1,250 faculty and 3,300 staff members. It spans three physical campuses: the main campus in Manhattan; K-State Salina, home to aviation and technology programs; and K-State Olathe, which serves the industry and workforce needs of Greater Kansas City.

K-State has nine colleges, Graduate School and K-State Online and offers more than 400 degrees and options, from bachelor's to doctoral degrees. K-State Extension also serves the citizenry with a presence in every county throughout Kansas and supports research in more than 20 K-State departments. K-State has an annual budget of more than \$900 million.

K-State is known for the passion and pride of its alumni. With more than 200,000 living graduates, the K-State Alumni Association ranks in the top 10 among Power Five conferences for the percentage of graduates who are members. Private giving to the university is around \$200 million per year, and the value of K-State's long-term investment pool is \$1 billion. The university and foundation recently completed a major fundraising campaign that raised \$1.6 billion.

The Princeton Review recognizes the university as one of the nation's best colleges. K-State also has been designated as an Innovation and Economic Prosperity University by the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities and is recognized as a Carnegie Community Engaged Institution. Commonly referred to as K-State, the university is proud of its welcoming environment.



ABOUT THE ROLE

Kansas State University seeks a dynamic and experienced leader to serve as the new Vice President for Engagement and Extension. The Vice President for Engagement and Extension reports directly to the President of Kansas State University and serves as a member of the President's Cabinet. This position provides executive leadership and strategic oversight for the following functional units:

- [Office of External Engagement](#)
- [Kansas State University Extension](#)
- [Office of Government Relations](#)
- [Office of Economic Development](#)

The Vice President maintains close internal working relationships with the following offices and leaders on matters central to the position's mission:

- Provost and Executive Vice President — regarding academic alignment with workforce and community needs, student success and experiential learning.
- Dean of the College of Agriculture, Director of the Kansas Agricultural Experiment Station — regarding K-State Extension's statewide programming, engagement priorities, and legislative needs. The Dean of Agriculture maintains a secondary reporting line to the current position.
- Vice President for Research — regarding corporate engagement, industry partnerships, technology commercialization, and business attraction activities that advance K-State's research and economic development agenda.
- Vice President for Communications and Marketing — regarding external communications strategy, stakeholder messaging, and university brand alignment.
- KSU Foundation, K-State Alumni Association, and K-State Athletics — regarding coordinated engagement with donors, alumni, and community stakeholders in support of the Next-Gen K-State strategic plan.
- Academic College Deans — to foster interdisciplinary collaboration, expand community-engaged scholarship, strengthen external partnerships, and advance the university's outreach and public impact.

POSITION RESPONSIBILITIES

University Engagement and Extension (50%)

The Vice President serves as the primary champion and architect of K-State's engagement and extension mission, connecting the university's intellectual and operational resources with communities, industries, and citizens across Kansas and beyond. Drawing on K-State's land-grant heritage, this leader will:

- Lead and advance a comprehensive, integrated university engagement strategy that reflects K-State's commitment to reciprocal, mutually beneficial partnerships with communities, industries, organizations, and individuals across Kansas and nationally.
- Serve as a university liaison and advocate for K-State Extension's statewide engagement mission, coordinating with the Dean of the College of Agriculture to align Extension priorities with broader university engagement and government relations strategies.
- Serve as the President's principal liaison with external stakeholders — including community leaders, legislators, industry executives, civic organizations, alumni, and strategic partners — to facilitate initiatives and partnerships with significant local, state, national, and international impact.
- Partner closely with the Vice President for Research and the corporate engagement team to identify, develop, and advance strategic industry relationships that serve both the university's research enterprise and its broader economic development mission. Ensure that government relations and external engagement activities are aligned with and amplify the university's corporate engagement priorities.
- Work with the Provost and Executive Vice President to foster a culture of engaged scholarship across academic units, supporting faculty and staff in connecting research, teaching, and service to real-world community needs and co-creating knowledge with public and private partners.
- Partner with the KSU Foundation, the K-State Alumni Association, and K-State Athletics to amplify engagement opportunities, coordinate stakeholder outreach, and advance the Next-Gen K-State strategic plan.
- Represent K-State in national higher education associations, including the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU), the Engagement Scholarship Consortium, and other peer networks to advance the university's engagement mission and national profile.
- Develop and maintain systems for tracking, measuring, and communicating the university's community and stakeholder engagement outcomes and impact.

Government Relations (30%)

K-State's sustained excellence depends on strong, trust-based relationships with elected officials, policy makers, regulatory bodies, and governmental partners at the state and federal levels. The Vice President will:

- Serve as K-State's chief governmental affairs officer, directing the university's comprehensive legislative and regulatory advocacy strategy at the Kansas Legislature, the Kansas Board of Regents, the Governor's Office, and with the United States Congress and federal agencies.
- Represent K-State's interests and legislative priorities with state and federal elected officials and their staffs, ensuring that the university speaks with one coordinated, strategic voice in all governmental interactions.
- Lead the Office of Government Relations, providing direction and mentorship to professional government relations staff and maintaining university protocols that ensure all official governmental contacts are appropriately coordinated.
- Develop, monitor, and advocate for K-State's annual state and federal budget priorities, including appropriations for Education and General operations, Public Service and Agriculture programs, research funding streams, and capital projects.
- Confers with the K-State Foundation on university, legislative and philanthropic priorities.

- Identify, monitor, and proactively respond to state and federal legislation, regulatory changes, and policy initiatives that affect K-State's operations, mission, and strategic goals — including those with implications for agricultural research, K-State Extension, higher education policy, research funding, and workforce development.
- Maintain K-State's relationships within the Kansas congressional delegation and with key federal agencies, particularly the United States Department of Agriculture, the National Science Foundation, the Department of Energy, and other research-funding partners, in close coordination with the Vice President for Research.
- Work collaboratively with the Vice President for Research to align federal relations activities with the university's research, innovation, and corporate engagement priorities, presenting a unified K-State voice on policy and funding matters at the federal level.
- Coordinate with the Kansas Board of Regents and peer institution government relations offices to advance shared higher education policy priorities in Kansas and nationally.
- Lead and develop the K-State Advocates program and related grassroots legislative engagement efforts, mobilizing faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community partners as effective advocates for K-State's public policy agenda.
- Provide leadership in emergency legislative and regulatory response when critical policy developments require rapid, coordinated university action.
- Ensure full compliance with applicable lobbying regulations, conflict-of-interest policies, and university protocols governing all governmental relations activities.

Economic Development (20%)

As a cornerstone of the Kansas economy and a designated Innovation and Economic Prosperity University by APLU, K-State has a distinctive obligation to drive economic vitality throughout the state. The Vice President will:

- Lead the university's strategic economic development agenda, working in close partnership with the Vice President for Research to position K-State as a driver of business attraction, innovation, entrepreneurship, workforce development, and community prosperity throughout Kansas and the region.
- Serve as the primary external-facing university liaison for economic development partnerships with the Governor's Office, the Kansas Department of Commerce, the Kansas Legislature's economic development committees, regional economic development organizations, industry associations, and chambers of commerce — ensuring that K-State's corporate engagement capabilities, research assets, and extension resources are effectively communicated and deployed in support of Kansas economic growth.
- Coordinate the Office of Economic Development and ensure alignment of university economic development activities with the state of Kansas's economic priorities, including agriculture, food systems, manufacturing, energy, and the biosciences.
- Partner with the Vice President for Research, KSU Research Foundation (KSURF), and the corporate engagement team on business attraction, technology commercialization, and industry partnership development, serving as a government relations and external engagement bridge between K-State's research enterprise and Kansas's economic development infrastructure.
- Advance K-State's role in the APLU Innovation and Economic Prosperity Universities framework, coordinating comprehensive self-assessment, strategic planning, and reporting for the university's IEP designation.
- Champion K-State's innovation infrastructure — including the Edge Collaboration District, the Agriculture Innovation Initiative facilities (the L. Eldon Gideon Agronomy Research and Innovation Complex, the Western Star Global Grain and Food Center, the BIVAP Innovation Center, and the Bilbrey Family Event Center), and related assets — as tools for economic development and partnership in coordination with the Vice President for Research.
- Develop and communicate compelling narratives about K-State's economic impact for use with legislators, state officials, media, and community partners, grounded in data and economic impact analyses.
- Lead the development of regular economic impact studies and data-driven analyses that demonstrate K-State's value to Kansas communities and businesses, the Legislature, and the public.

QUALIFICATIONS

Required Qualifications

- An earned advanced degree (master's or doctoral level) from an accredited institution in public administration, political science, agricultural sciences, higher education administration, communications, business, or a closely related field.
- A minimum of ten (10) years of progressively responsible leadership experience in university engagement, government relations, economic development, or a closely related function in a higher education, government, or comparably complex organizational setting.
- Demonstrated success in developing and managing relationships with elected officials, government agencies, and legislative bodies at the state and/or federal level.
- Proven ability to lead and inspire diverse teams of professionals in a complex, decentralized university environment.
- Outstanding communication skills, including public speaking, legislative testimony, and written advocacy, with the ability to represent K-State effectively to multiple audiences.
- Demonstrated ability to build and sustain productive working relationships with peer senior leaders across a complex organization with shared but distinct portfolios.
- Deep understanding of land-grant university mission, values, and the role of public universities in advancing the public good.
- Demonstrated commitment to inclusive excellence, access, and the equitable distribution of university resources and opportunities.

Preferred Qualifications

- A doctoral degree in a relevant discipline, with the potential for tenure in an appropriate academic department.
- Prior experience at a land-grant university in a senior leadership capacity in Extension, engagement, government relations, or economic development.
- Direct experience with the Kansas Legislature, Kansas Board of Regents, and/or Kansas state agencies.
- Familiarity with federal policy, sponsored funding programs, and federal agencies that support research, extension, workforce development, innovation, and community engagement relevant to land-grant universities (e.g., USDA, Department of Education, Department of Defense, NSF, NIH and other federal partners).
- Experience working at the intersection of university research enterprise functions and governmental or external affairs, with an understanding of industry partnership and technology commercialization frameworks.
- Familiarity with Cooperative Extension administration and the Smith-Lever and Hatch Act funding frameworks that underpin land-grant engagement missions.
- Experience with the APLU Innovation and Economic Prosperity Universities program or comparable economic development frameworks.
- Knowledge of K-State's current strategic plan (Next-Gen K-State) and the university's engagement enterprise.
- Established networks in Kansas agriculture, business, and civic communities.
- Experience working with university foundations, alumni associations, and other external partners to advance university priorities.



Why K-State?

At K-State, passion drives our purpose. Our faculty and staff are deeply committed to the meaningful impact of their work, collectively shaping the future of our next-generation land-grant university. Every employee plays a vital role in advancing our mission, touching the lives of Kansans and communities worldwide. Through our research, teaching, and service, we strive to create positive change and realize K-State's vision of becoming a leading land-grant institution.

Next-Gen K-State Strategic Plan

In September 2023, K-State launched its [Next-Gen K-State Strategic Plan](#), which charts our path forward, driven by ambitious goals and a deep connection to our mission and vision. The plan was supported by a strategic planning process that engaged more than 10,000 members of the K-State community — students, faculty, staff, alumni, friends and community members all lent their voices to the planning effort.

Guided by the greater good.

Through the Next-Gen K-State strategic planning process, the university community identified six core values that orient our thinking, inspire us to be the best versions of ourselves and serve as our guideposts as we make the decisions that drive us forward. As we live these values together, we collectively express our unity as One K-State in all that we do.

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 accessible, inclusive and 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, lasting legacy.

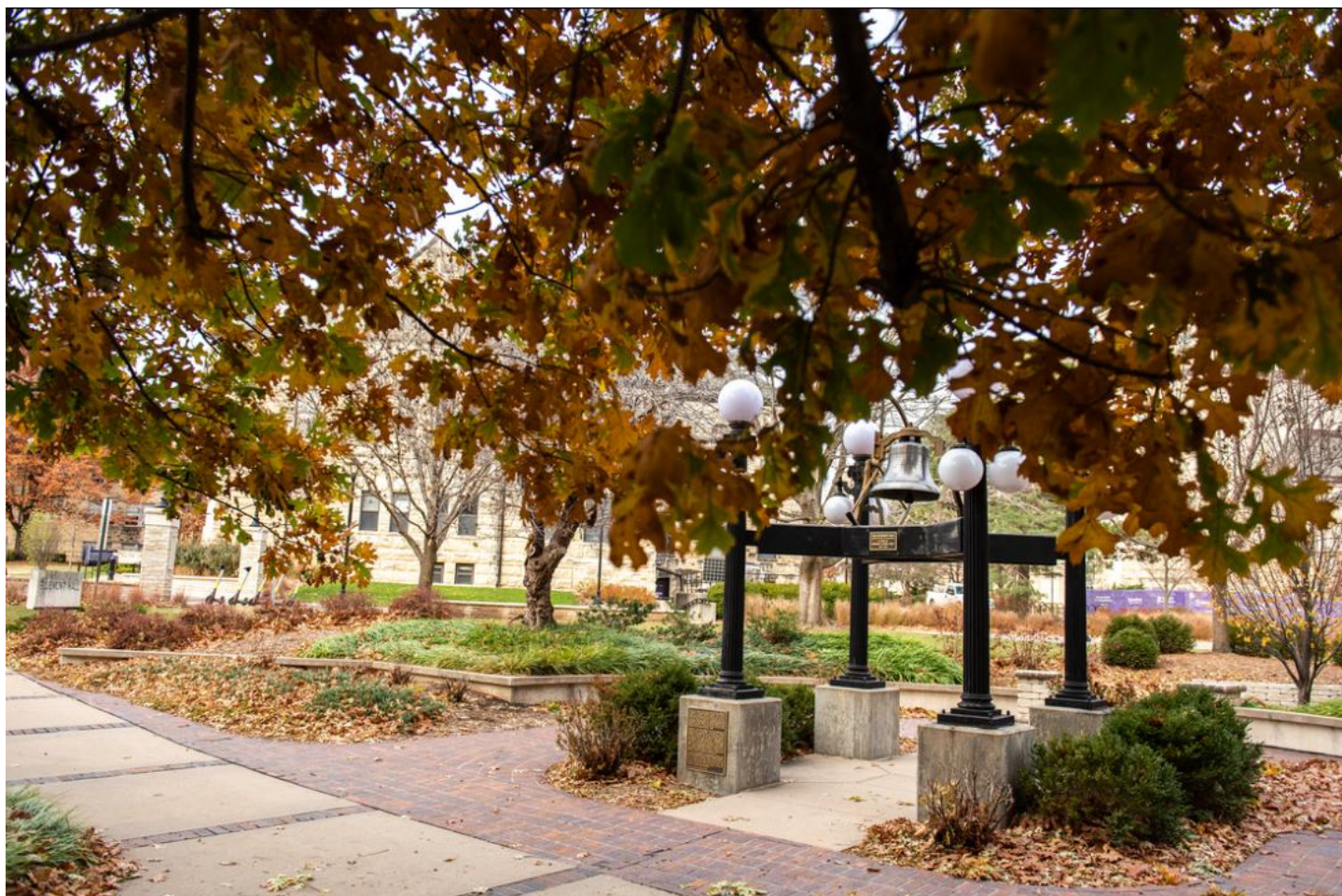
University and student achievements.

- Innovation and Economic Prosperity University designation, *Association of Public and Land-grant Universities*.
- Carnegie Community Engagement Classification, *Carnegie Foundation*.
- 96% of graduates are employed or furthering their education.
- 85.5% sustained freshman-to-sophomore retention rate.
- 15 times in the last 19 years, K-State's Black Student Union named Big 12's most outstanding Black student government council.
- 21% of students are first-generation.
- 500+ student clubs and organizations.
- \$91M in scholarships and awards in 2023-24.

Athletics

As a founding member of the Big 12, K-State competes in the Football Bowl Subdivision of NCAA Division I. The university has garnered 18 Big 12 championships, including a 2022 title in football, and is coming off a memorable Elite Eight run in men's basketball in 2023. K-State Athletics has maintained national acclaim as one of the NCAA's most financially solvent programs and remains one of just a few dozen universities nationwide, and the only institution in Kansas, to operate without use of state tax or university tuition dollars. Wildcat student-athletes continue to shine in the classroom as all programs exceeded benchmarks for the eight straight years in the latest NCAA APR rankings while also ranking among the best in the Big 12 in graduation rates.





Principles of Community

Kansas State University is a land-grant, public research University committed to teaching and learning, research, and service to the people of Kansas, the nation, and the world. We believe our collective mission is best accomplished when every member of the University community acknowledges and practices the following principles:

- **We** affirm the inherent dignity and value of every person and strive to maintain an atmosphere of justice based on respect for each other.
- **We** affirm the value of human diversity and inclusion for community. We stand united against all forms of discrimination.
- **We** affirm the right of each person to freely express thoughts and opinions in a spirit of civility and decency. We believe that diversity of views enriches our learning environment, and we promote open expression within a climate of courtesy, sensitivity, and mutual respect. For more information, please see the University's [Statement on Free Speech and Expression](#) and the University's [Statement on Academic Freedom](#).
- **We** affirm the value of honesty and integrity and will act accordingly in all professional endeavors and expect the same from our colleagues.
- **We** acknowledge that we are a part of multiple communities, and we have a responsibility to be engaged in a positive way with our civic partners.
- **We** recognize our individual responsibilities to the University community and to the principles that sustain it. We will each strive to contribute to a positive spirit that affirms learning and growth for all members of the community.

ABOUT THE COMMUNITY

Situated in the heart of northeast Kansas' scenic Flint Hills, Manhattan's 55,000 citizens enjoy a dynamic region with shopping, dining, entertainment and nightlife. Manhattan is also conveniently located for quick access to major urban centers. In addition to being less than two hours from Kansas City, the Manhattan Regional Airport offers multiple jet flights daily to Dallas-Fort Worth and Chicago.

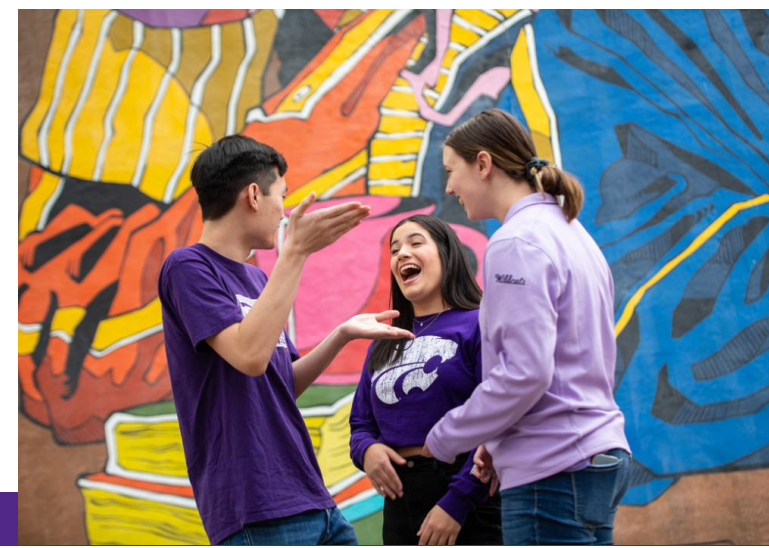


Additionally, the city of Manhattan has been a valuable partner to Kansas State University in facilitating growth of the institution. That's why the Princeton Review routinely recognizes Manhattan and Kansas State in the Top 5 community Town & Gown Relations. Manhattan has also been ranked No. 2 Best Place to Live in America by Livability.com. Manhattan is affectionately known as the "Little Apple," a nod to its East Coast namesake, but has a vibrant culture all its own.



A sampling of what residents look forward to year-round:

- A cost-of-living index of 89% of the U.S. average, according to the Council for Community and Economic Research.
- Shopping, dining and socializing in Aggieville, a local entertainment district with a fun, energetic vibe.
- A vibrant, revitalized downtown area with fine dining options and local boutiques.
- Recreation opportunities at the Konza Prairie, Tuttle Creek Lake and State Park, Linear Trail and more.
- A vibrant health care community, including a 150-bed acute care facility and an independent state-of-the-art surgical center.
- The university's McCain Performance Series, which hosts acclaimed Broadway musicals, comedians, musicians and other entertainers.
- Exciting Big 12 athletic events from a Power 5 conference.
- Colbert Hills Golf Course, ranked as the top public golf course in Kansas.
- Excellent K-12 education. The local high school ranks among the top 5 percent of U.S. high schools, and the district is home to several Kansas Master Teachers.





APPLICATION PROCESS

Buffkin / Baker is assisting K-State with this search. Confidential inquiries, nominations, and applications are invited. Review of applications will continue until the position is filled. For full consideration, application materials should be received no later than August 24, 2026. Candidates should provide a letter of application describing their interest and qualifications for the position, current vita, a one-page leadership statement, and five references. References will not be contacted without permission. Incomplete applications will not be considered. Nominations and application materials should be sent electronically via email to Martin Baker and Chelsie Whitelock of Buffkin / Baker at ksuvpee@buffkinbaker.com.