

TASK FORCE STRATEGIC PLANNING THEMES

JAN. 6, 2023

OVERVIEW

Each of these themes represents priority areas of focus as K-State works toward becoming the next-generation land-grant university. While these themes will serve as the basis for the additional dialogue that will inform our next strategic plan, they will not necessarily be the only components of that strategic plan. Some theme areas, priorities, or strategies may be re-positioned or re-envisioned through the work and additional conversations among our task forces, Advisory Committee, and university leadership, while other themes may rise to prominence through the same process and necessitate additional goals or strategies.

TASK FORCE CONSIDERATIONS

The task forces that support these themes will be tasked with considering key standard questions related to the current and future of K-State, along with a series of challenge questions and problem statements designed to push our collective thinking about what K-State can and should become. The discussions related to these questions will become critical inputs to drive their recommendations for goals, strategies, and performance outcomes and targets in each area.

FRAMING QUESTIONS FOR TASK FORCES

- What needs to have happened by 2030?
- What works today and what does not?
- What are we going to do that is different? What can we do that truly sets K-State apart?
- What is required in the form of resources, structures, or other inputs to achieve our vision?

Each task force will also be responsible for considering the programmatic and fiscal needs to advance the priority goals and strategies that will be fundamental to our future. The work of these task forces will also align with that of the Next-Gen K-State Brand Task Force, which is helping to guide K-State's future brand strategy in alignment with our future vision and strategic plan.

HOW OUR VALUES INFORM THIS WORK

It is important to cross-reference our values and themes to set the stage for our future goals and achieve our vision. To ensure these goals are rooted in our values and relevant to our themes, we will utilize a matrix approach that provides an opportunity to translate each key theme through the lens of each of our values. In doing this, we bring life and deeper meaning to our values. We will also use this method to help our task forces uncover new ways for our themes and values to drive meaningful action.

CRITICAL ENABLERS

As with our K-State 2025 planning process, we recognize there will be a series of common elements or critical enablers like **communication and marketing, technology, funding, systems, structures** and more that are constant across each theme area. We will consider these enablers as we set goals and strategies, recognizing they are fundamental to our success.

OTHER PLANS

There are a number of existing plans or efforts underway that will become key parts of our future. Our economic prosperity, strategic enrollment, and diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging plans all exist and are being implemented in real-time. Our colleges and units also have their own strategic plans they are continuing to advance. Our commitment is to revisit these and other plans once this strategic plan is complete to both strengthen and update them, taking what we have learned through this process and building alignment across all plans with our new strategic vision.

We will also begin a new campus master planning process following completion of our strategic plan and conduct a holistic review of our university budget model. These future plans and initiatives, along with others, will similarly connect to and build upon the foundation of our strategic plan.

THE FUTURE K-STATE ORGANIZATION

In parallel with strategic planning, we are conducting a holistic review of our university organization in pursuit of operational excellence across the institution, recognizing there may be structural or process changes that are necessary to maximize our future success – and, in making our operations more effective along the way, we expect to improve quality of life for our people and save both time and resources that can be redeployed into our institution as we move forward.

THEME AREAS

BUILDING AND SUSTAINING THE NEXT-GENERATION LAND-GRANT WORKFORCE AT K-STATE

People are at the heart of all we do at K-State. Our faculty and staff educate, train, challenge, empower, and support our learners who are meeting the needs of both today and tomorrow. They engage in groundbreaking discovery and innovation, invest in our state’s communities, and provide the critical supports needed for us to deliver on our mission. And they have very different needs, with both our faculty and staff requiring very different structures, policies, and frameworks to help us recruit and retain our talent while maximizing their work and impact across our K-State community.

We also know that higher education is changing. The workplace is evolving dramatically in higher education, introducing new challenges while enabling new opportunities for how we work and collaborate with one another to fulfill our mission. Our faculty and staff demographics are also changing. We must consider what is necessary for our workforce to keep pace with and navigate these changes, innovate alongside them, and maximize our ability to be successful. This involves building a culture of support, equity, and transparency that puts actions behind the words “we value our people” and demonstrates our commitment to their wellbeing. We must also maintain a culture that prioritizes diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging for all faculty and staff. And it includes implementing structures that hold us all accountable to our mission and one another. By doing so, we will ensure our workforce is stable, supported, constantly aligned with our future vision, and positioned to enable all we seek to accomplish as the next-generation land-grant university.

CHALLENGE QUESTIONS

- What does the workforce of a next-generation land-grant university look like?
- How do we ensure we are building and maintaining an environment that prioritizes diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging for all our faculty and staff? What supporting initiatives, programs, structures, and resources are necessary?
- What are the unique elements of a next-generation land-grant university that can enable us to recruit and retain a more diverse workforce?
- What does it mean for K-State to be a competitive employer, and how will we apply that lens when considering work format, flexibility, role definition, and compensation?
- How should we recruit, retain, support, accommodate, communicate with, evaluate, incentivize, and reward our people? What should career mobility and progression look like at K-State?
- How should we hold one another accountable and evaluate performance in a way that is fair and equitable to all our people?

- What structures, policies, or systems need to be modernized to help our faculty and staff do their work and be successful?
- When we think about all the changes that will happen by 2030, how should we approach structures and policies that drive innovation and help the next generation of faculty and staff be successful? How do these needs differ between faculty and staff?
- What capacity is needed among our faculty and staff to fulfill our mission and achieve our vision? Where are our greatest gaps?

DELIVERING AN UNMATCHED AND IMPACTFUL STUDENT EXPERIENCE

K-State is home to a passionate student population and distinctly unique student experience in higher education, where we have an opportunity to transform lives, train future leaders, and empower graduates to become change agents throughout Kansas and across the world.

As demographics change and new learner profiles emerge, we must work to understand how to both preserve positive elements of our existing student culture and adapt other areas to meet the needs of our future students – whether they are more of a traditional on-campus student or a nontraditional learner who may be focused more on developing key skills or quickly earning industry credentials. We must recognize different types of students and other learners require different approaches and solutions to help them fully maximize their experience. This is highly dependent upon our ability to be a university that constantly demonstrates our commitment to student wellbeing and one that not only values but embraces diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging throughout our student population and across all parts of the student and learning experience. We must also make our value proposition explicit and clear to all prospective students and other learners, helping them clearly understand why K-State is the place they should attend to follow their passions and realize their fullest potential. And we must focus on providing a positive, transformative experience for all our students and other learners who come to us seeking the value and impact K-State can have on their lives.

CHALLENGE QUESTIONS

- Why do students attend a university today? Why will they attend a university in the future?
- What is our “value-add”? What can students receive or experience at K-State that they cannot get anywhere else? How should we build on that in the future?
- Given our future demographics, what types of students and other learners are we recruiting and what do we need to support them? What are our targets for growing our student population and the diversity that comprises it?
- How can we best support nontraditional students?

- How do we ensure we are building and maintaining an environment that prioritizes diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging for all our students and other learners? What supporting initiatives, programs, structures, and resources are necessary?
- How should our student and campus culture shift to best support the needs of a diverse student population?
- What should our delivery systems and support structures for students look like? How should we support the wellbeing of all our students and learners?
- What systems, communications, or other operational supports and strategies do we need to maximize our student experience?
- How do we innovate in areas like internships, study abroad programs, undergraduate research and extracurriculars that contribute to this distinctive student experience?
- How should we ensure students receive an unmatched and impactful experience while progressing toward and reaching graduation?

ACCELERATING ACADEMIC INNOVATION TO MEET STUDENT NEEDS

The student profile of today and tomorrow is very different from those who K-State has traditionally served. We must aggressively work to meet these students and learners where they are, designing relevant programs and curriculum and aligning our practices with their needs. This means rethinking the typical classroom setting where learning occurs today. It also means challenging the delivery systems and structures we have traditionally leaned upon to serve students – recognizing we must be uncompromising in pushing ourselves to rapidly deliver academic solutions designed specifically to meet the needs of our students and other learners, as well as our external partners and collaborators who depend on our university and students to grow their communities and economies.

Above all, we must be nimble and agile in all we do, recognizing rapid change requires an equal focus on innovation and disruption in all we do to meet these demands.

CHALLENGE QUESTIONS

- Who are our students of the future and how are they different from today? What does our future student and learner population look like at K-State?
- How should we be flexible and agile with the programs and curriculum we develop to meet the needs of our students, learners, communities, and economies?
- What structures, policies, systems, and communications need to change as we think about new ways to instruct, engage with, and support students in the future?

- What do we need to do to reimagine the K-State learning experience based on the learner of the future, and not just students learning at our Manhattan campus?
- How should we be connected to the rest of the world? What should our international profile look like? How should our international programming innovate and adapt to meet the needs of students, researchers, and communities?
- How do we extend and expand the impact of our offerings beyond the traditional classroom – across each of our campuses, onsite with industry stakeholders and employers, in our K-12 schools, in partnership with Kansas State Research and Extension, and with other educational partners?
- What did we learn from navigating and responding to the pandemic? What practices did we develop that we should keep? What do we need to do to prepare to respond and innovate in the face of the next disruption?

INVESTING IN THE JOBS AND ECONOMIES OF TOMORROW

Economic prosperity is a central component to our land-grant mission that crosses all parts of the institution. Some of the ways our K-State community drives economic prosperity is by educating students as future members of the workforce, engaging in discovery and driving innovation that builds companies and economies, and delivering a circular impact on all the communities we serve locally and globally.

We must build on this impact by constantly pushing to understand the needs of our partners, employers, communities, and industries and align all that we do – and assets we have to offer – to drive the future prosperity of our state, nation, and world. This includes developing the structures, policies, and frameworks that unlock the fullest potential of our innovation and how we support broad economic development across the institution. We must also leverage our unique statewide infrastructure to develop the type of integrated and responsive solutions our partners in workforce and economic development throughout the state need for our economies and communities to thrive.

CHALLENGE QUESTIONS

- How should we redefine or expand our definition of economic prosperity in the future?
- What type of workforce pipeline is needed in the future? What will employers want and need for their future workforce? What will communities need from their future residents? How do we best create and align a workforce of K-State students and graduates with workforce and community needs?
- What do our economic and workforce development partners need the most from K-State in the future?

- How should all parts of the university contribute to economic development? What structures are needed to help drive this impact?
- How do we enable partnerships to happen more seamlessly? What should a coordinated, reimagined approach to industry engagement look like? How would such a model drive economic growth and prosperity in areas like intellectual property development and commercialization? Where should it reside within K-State? What structures or supports are needed?
- What can and should be commercialized? What areas have the highest probability of future success when it comes to intellectual property development? How do we best support, incentivize, and reward our entrepreneurial faculty who engage in commercialization activities?
- How should we leverage our statewide presence to develop and bring workforce solutions to all of our communities and partners? How can we best leverage our Olathe and Salina campuses to drive economic and workforce innovation while continuing to push innovation across our Manhattan campus?

DRIVING TRANSFORMATIONAL DISCOVERY, INNOVATION, AND SCHOLARSHIP

At K-State, we have an exciting opportunity to collectively define the research profile of a next-generation land-grant university – in basic and applied research, through interdisciplinary collaborations, via industry partnerships, and by creating solutions that can be commercialized and drive broad economic growth.

In doing so, we must identify and build the environments that best enable the collaborations we know can and will amplify the impact of our discovery, both internally and externally. We must think about the structures and supports that are necessary to advance this type of collaboration and bring people together in new and exciting ways. We must ensure our research enterprise is aligned with the needs and opportunities of the world in which our discovery occurs, and where society is headed next. And we must take great care to integrate all facets of our institution so that research, teaching, and Extension are fully blended and positioned to support one another and enable this transformational impact.

CHALLENGE QUESTIONS

- What does the research profile of the next-generation land-grant university look like?
- How do we best blend and reward teaching, research, and engagement and Extension into an integrated environment?
- How do we drive and incentivize collaboration among faculty, staff, students, and external partners?

- How do we create environments that bring faculty together and enable interdisciplinary work?
- What are the necessary cross-collaborations among colleges and external partners that foster transdisciplinary research? What structures do we need to enable such collaborations?
- How should we grow and support the next generation of scholar-researchers at K-State?
- How should we effectively collaborate with industry partners in developing solutions that meet their needs? How is our research and discovery seen as relevant to industry?
- How should our research drive overall wellbeing and positively impact communities for the next 30 years and beyond? How do we change people’s lives through our research and discovery?

INTEGRATING ENGAGEMENT ACROSS ALL WE DO

As a higher education institution, we have numerous communities and partners we connect with and support, with needs that are constantly evolving – often at a faster pace than higher education has historically been able to maintain. We have a unique opportunity to leverage our statewide footprint in redefining how a higher education institution engages with its many disparate stakeholders in an integrated and impactful way – adapting to changing circumstances and elevating both the perceived and real value we can deliver to people, partners, industries, and communities. And, as a land-grant university, it is imperative that we do so in a way that strengthens the wellbeing of Kansans across the state.

To do so, we must have the appropriately integrated structures that leverage the significant abilities of our K-State community in the context of engagement, bringing together the relevant pieces and parts that drive transformational impact. This extends to our people as well, where we must effectively communicate and engage with one another to amplify our work, both inside and outside our university. We must also operate with a full understanding of all our community partners and their needs so that we engage with them as effectively as possible – including those throughout Kansas and those that extend to all corners of the nation and world. And we also must make it clear how these same audiences can and should engage with our institution, along with the value we bring to their work or daily lives.

CHALLENGE QUESTIONS

- Who are our community partners today, both internal and external? What partners have we not had before? Who will our partners be in the future, both in Kansas and outside the state?
- How does K-State currently engage our audiences and various stakeholders? What drives that engagement?
- What do our community partners need from K-State beyond traditional teaching, research, and Extension? How will their needs change in the coming years?

- Where do we have gaps or opportunities in our engagement? What structures are needed to fill or mitigate those gaps? How do we best organize or mobilize our people to support this engagement?
- How do we best elevate K-State, build a clear understanding of who we are, and demonstrate the value of K-State to all our stakeholders?
- How can we best leverage Extension in our engagement throughout the state? How should Extension evolve to meet our communities' future needs?
- What is the ideal linkage between Extension and all other K-State programs? What structures do we need to support these connections?