Charge to the Task Force

The strategic challenge for the Lawrence campus of the University of Kansas is to enhance the nature of the educational experience by identifying a role that builds on our historic strengths and encompasses our collective values. To that end, this task force was charged to address the following:

- Define the attributes of a KU education/degree. What do we expect of a KU graduate in terms of knowledge, aptitude, and values? What makes a KU education valued and unique?
- Based on the attributes of a KU education, what are the defining characteristics of a premier learning community? Develop specific strategies to answer the following questions:
  -- What are the essential ingredients of the campus’ learning environment?
  -- What support services are needed to ensure academic success?
  -- What strategies will ensure a diverse community of scholars and a diversity of experiences for all members of the community?

In response to the task force’s charge, input from students, faculty, staff, and alumni was sought through focus groups, informal meetings with governance groups on campus, public hearings, and dissemination of a draft report throughout the campus community to solicit feedback for this final report. This report is organized in the following sections:

I. Attributes of a KU Degree/Education
II. Definition of a Premier Learning Community
III. The Learning Environment and Essentials for Academic Success
IV. Challenges and Suggestions for Future Planning
V. Appendix--Specific Recommendations for Change

I. Attributes of a KU Degree/Education

As a major research university, the University of Kansas should provide learning opportunities grounded in a research tradition that are not found in smaller universities or liberal arts colleges. Students attending KU should have a wide variety of learning opportunities. We recommend a greater emphasis on small seminars and discussion sessions, performance courses, laboratories
and workshops, independent learning and service experiences. All students should be familiar with the research methods of their respective disciplines and should have opportunities to participate in research in collaboration with the faculty or other students and through their own studies. Students should have access to up-to-date technology, and their learning experiences should be enhanced through technology both in and out of the classroom. A well-rounded education also entails interaction with as diverse a group of people as possible and enjoyment of cultural and social opportunities provided by the performing arts, museums, lectures, and sports. Opportunities for enrichment outside the classroom -- including internships, field work, study abroad, service learning or directed study -- should be part of every student’s KU experience. As a major research university, graduate education is a key component of the university’s total mission. Thus, as a premier learning community, the Lawrence campus must foster graduate as well as undergraduate education.

II. Definition of a Premier Learning Community

A premier learning community supports and inspires the intellectual and personal development of all members of the community (students, faculty, and staff). A premier learning community fosters an environment that values diversity, differences, and the rights of all individuals. It supports and creates new knowledge through research and scholarly inquiry on the part of faculty and students, and it shares that knowledge through publications and service to the broader community. A learning community is centered on the classroom, but extends throughout the campus and into the world around it. In such a community, all activities, roles, and responsibilities are related with its members engaged in a common enterprise.

A learning community is a place where all undergraduate students can strive to achieve their educational goals with the assistance and guidance of faculty and graduate teaching assistants dedicated to quality instruction. Learners encompass both undergraduate and graduate, traditional and non-traditional students, as well as faculty and staff who are engaged in study and research that seeks to expand the limits of knowledge. All of these groups have much to learn from each other.

In a premier learning community, learning does not end when the class period is over. Social, cultural, political, and recreational opportunities for growth abound for all who seek them out. Above all, however, a learning community is rooted in place and time. The University of Kansas is extraordinarily blessed by the beauty of its campus, the greater Lawrence community, and the state of Kansas itself. For its students, the KU tradition of learning may begin when one sets foot on Mt. Oread, but it should last a lifetime.
While a learning community is rooted in place, information technologies provide opportunities to expand the KU learning community rather than threaten its existence as a residential campus. It is the conclusion of this task force that campus-based education is not anachronistic in a technological age. The value-added dimensions of an education rooted in place can never be replaced by solitary learning. It is the challenge of the University of Kansas’ Lawrence campus to enhance its core mission of teaching, research, and service through both time-honored and technology-based means and to further expand programs and learning opportunities through technology to enrich the lives of students, faculty, staff, and members of the larger community.

III. The Learning Environment and Essentials for Academic Success

To maintain the university’s academic reputation and to ensure students’ success in meeting their academic goals, the university must adapt to a changing educational environment. Academic success in the future will depend on maintenance of high quality undergraduate and graduate instruction, advising, and mentoring. The size of the university and the increasing number of undergraduate students living off campus require new efforts to maintain a sense of community. Access to a comprehensive student support system is vital to improving undergraduate retention and graduation rates and graduate student mentoring and professional career development. Changing demographics and further internationalization of the economy require that students be exposed to a culturally-diverse student body, faculty, and curriculum. The need for lifelong learning will require the university to offer more classes in the evening and more classes in non-campus settings or through distance learning. This is especially important for graduate students who are not teaching or research assistants. Continuing education and professional certification as well as academic degrees will all be end-products of instruction.

All students need to understand the methods of research to better prepare them for the ever-changing demands of a technological and information-based society. The emerging professorate, as represented by graduate teaching, needs to learn how to teach and advise as well as how to conduct research.

IV. Challenges and Suggestions for Future Planning

In the process of conducting research for this report, the committee identified eight overriding issues that should be addressed in future planning. These issues encompass the subjects the task force was directed to study as well as others that were identified by members of the KU community. The eight issues are identified and discussed, and recommendations are made. Specific, short-range issues and recommendations not directly related to strategic planning are included in the Appendix.
1. **Focus on Education.** Learning should be the primary business of the university. Most students believe that they receive a high quality education at KU, but they also believe there is room for improvement. As a major research university, KU should build on its strong research tradition to enhance learning opportunities for both undergraduate and graduate students. Barriers to interdisciplinary research and teaching pursuits, including credit and grant overhead attribution, minimum class size requirements that prevent development of new courses, and inter-campus policies that inhibit cooperation, should be reduced. Recommendations for making learning the focus of the KU experience include:

*Undergraduate Education*

It was noted that some undergraduate students do not consider their role as learners to be primary. Retention and graduation rates are indicators of this problem. Studies reveal that many students are working more hours per week than they spend in classes and on academic pursuits and that some elements of the KU social climate distract from its educational mission. In addition to the specific recommendations in this report, the Carnegie Report on Reinventing Undergraduate Education should be reviewed for additional suggestions for creating the bridge between research and quality undergraduate instruction.

- Although traditional classroom instruction will remain at the center of the educational experience, students have requested greater availability of novel learning opportunities that stress active learning such as workshops, laboratories, discussion courses, and service learning. Learning opportunities inside and outside the classroom should provide ample opportunity for further development of students' oral and written communication skills.
- KU's research mission is seen by many undergraduates as compromising, instead of enhancing, their educational experience. Each student should undertake a research experience that is discipline appropriate. For some students, a community service project may be more appropriate. Undergraduate research assistants should be involved in faculty research projects where appropriate. Every student should have at least one assignment in the freshman/sophomore years that includes library research. Faculty should work with the library staff to enhance the library research experience.
- Provide more needs-based financial aid and maintain low tuition rates. Revisit the issue of linear tuition that was cited as discouraging students from taking elective courses, especially outside their major, that would enhance their learning experiences.
Advisement needs to become more personalized. The efforts started with the formation of the Freshman/Sophomore Advising Center should be supported to ensure that all freshmen and sophomores have access to the Center. Faculty and staff should be given the necessary training and tools to provide advising beyond enrollment matters for all students. Since advising is an integral part of faculty responsibilities, rewards and recognition for advising should be enhanced.

Too many first-year students feel overwhelmed and isolated by a system that often includes large lecture classes that allow little interaction with faculty. Such classes should be augmented with smaller, possibly optional, discussion sections, informal study groups or review sessions. FIGS [Freshman Interest Groups] should be created or PRE 101 offerings expanded to include all freshmen.

The University should continue to develop academic support programs in residential units. This may include the development of additional housing units for special academic groupings of students (e.g., the 3E Program and the Honors House).

Academic support programs should be developed for students living in fraternities and sororities, similar to those being developed in the residence halls. The university should continue to work with Greek houses to improve any problems that detract from the merits of the system.

The University should work more closely with secondary schools to gain a better understanding of the type of student who will attend the university in the future. This is especially important in adjusting the curriculum to accommodate in-state students who have met the new Regents qualified admission requirements and students who have long-term exposure to information technologies throughout their K-12 experiences.

The primacy of academics should permeate everything that we do, from Traditions Day during orientation to Commencement Day to athletic events.

Realizing that alcohol abuse is arguably the most crucial social problem on the Lawrence campus, the University should strengthen its efforts to promote responsible behavior with regard to alcohol.

Graduate Education
Graduate teaching assistants are an important link between undergraduates and the permanent faculty. As such, they play a potentially critical role in the development of a unified learning community. Because graduate students generally live off-campus and are in smaller classes (often in a single department), they can feel isolated from many of the social activities that contribute to the KU experience for undergraduates. Some graduate students who were interviewed commented that they did not feel respected as colleagues by departmental faculty. Since teaching and research assistants represent a minority of the total graduate student population, departments need to create a culture that is inclusive of all graduate students.
• Many departments do an outstanding job of matching graduate students with faculty mentors. Unfortunately, many graduate students talk of feeling adrift in their own departments, even though a mentor may be formally assigned to them. Mentorship is the most important aspect of the graduate student experience, and individual departments must develop clear roles and responsibilities for mentors which include regular classroom/laboratory observations and feedback opportunities, in addition to their other responsibilities to their students.

• Graduate students should engage in a variety of research projects through collaborative and independent efforts exclusive of a thesis or dissertation project that provide opportunities for publication or conference presentations.

• The invaluable role of teaching assistants in the classroom must be concretely acknowledged through fair and competitive compensation. This will also assist in the recruitment of high-quality graduate students to the University.

• There is a wide range of training offered to new teaching assistants by their home departments. Some departments provide thorough orientation and require a teaching seminar. Others do neither. All departments should provide graduate students with instruction in sound pedagogical practices and coordinate the instructional development of new teaching assistants.

• Departments and the university, in general, need to provide work, study, and computer spaces for graduate students who are not teaching or research assistants. Departments should develop interdisciplinary seminars and activities for all graduate students.

• Placement and career advising need to provide more emphasis on careers outside academe. The university needs to develop more partnerships with the private sector or government agencies to provide applied research opportunities for graduate students.

• Conditions that add to the cost of graduate education need to be examined. This includes loss of in-state eligibility for non teaching assistantship appointments and barriers to residency.

• It is important that KU remain competitive for top graduate students. Fellowships to augment other forms of financial assistance must be established.

2. Increase Diversity. When this task force speaks of diversity, we intend the term to be used in its broadest sense. Overall, ethnic minority students feel that KU is a high-quality institution with some commitment to diversity on the part of the central administration. However, students have yet to witness the positive results of this commitment in terms of increased enrollments. Ethnic minority students at KU experience a degree of isolation due to the lack of diversity among students, faculty, and staff. They believed that their concerns are overshadowed by those in the majority. According to some students, the curriculum is neither broad nor inclusive. Consequently, there is a perception among these students that the experiences and contributions of ethnic minorities are not valued. Furthermore, the special needs of nontraditional students and members of the KU community with disabilities need to be considered when addressing diversity issues. As noted previously, a premier learning community prepares students to live in a diverse society; the KU experience currently is falling short of this goal.
To address these concerns we recommend:

- Develop a plan to ensure that diversity is evident in all areas of the curriculum and in the social and cultural climate of the university. Identify areas of curricular strength—courses and programs in which diversity is emphasized—then support, expand, and promote them.
- Nontraditional students require more night and on-line courses and access to child care facilities. The residency requirement for nontraditional graduate students needs to be studied in light of the availability of on-line and distance learning.

3. Achieve a Balance Among Teaching, Research, and Service. Undergraduate and graduate students as well as faculty indicated that the importance of teaching is often perceived to be of secondary importance to that of research. Service, which is essential to expanding the learning community beyond the campus as well as enabling the campus to function, is viewed as being of little importance. In fact, for faculty participation in service is seen as a detriment to promotion and tenure, since it can require considerable time and effort. Current criteria and instruments used for promotion and tenure view the three categories as distinct when they are complementary and interrelated. While it is acknowledged by the committee that it has traditionally been easier to verify scholarly activity than it has been to determine the quality of teaching or the relative importance of service activities, the following recommendations emphasize the importance of teaching and service, without diminishing the commitment to research, and further demonstrate their interrelationships:

- Conduct a study of promotion and tenure for the purpose of reviewing and updating current instruments, definitions, and expectations. In particular, outmoded evidence of teaching, research, and service as separate activities should be reevaluated and expectations regarding funded research more clearly stated.
- Encourage departments and divisions to consider the use of Teaching Portfolios as evidence of teaching effectiveness. (The portfolio is to teaching what lists of publications, grants, and honors are to research and scholarship. It is a collection of materials documenting teaching performance.)
- Teaching must become a more highly regarded part of the faculty’s job description. More emphasis should be placed on teaching and the scholarship of teaching in tenure, distinguished professor appointments, and merit raise determinations. Credit for development and supervision of on-line courses should be considered in promotion and tenure decisions.
- It is desirable that senior faculty members take on a leadership/mentor role with new faculty to help them become more effective teachers. The University should support these efforts through venues such as the Center for Teaching Excellence.
• Assistance in preparation and submission of research proposals should be improved. Workshops should be offered to assist faculty in formulating, preparing, and writing research grant proposals as well as administering grants once obtained.
• The reapportionment of faculty effort from the traditional 40/40/20 percentages for teaching, research, and service can allow for individual variation depending on the talents and assignments of particular faculty effort or the nature of activities that might include overlapping categories. However, increasing the level of a particular activity must be accompanied by additional effort in that area.
• Faculty currently spend a substantial part of their effort and time in committee work which is often duplicated by multiple committees across the campus. There needs to be better coordination of fact-finding and reporting activities across the university and greater reliance on offices such as OIRP to collect information that is currently being collected by faculty committees.

4. Support Classified and Unclassified Staff. Faculty and staff believe that the continued reductions in staffing levels have negatively affected KU. The lack of staff hurts our ability to deliver quality services, and staff feel frustrated in their ability to do a good job. Staff desire to contribute to KU as part of an overall team, but often feel that they are treated as “hired help.” They find the classified staff performance evaluation system inadequate for the purpose of giving employee feedback and motivating employees to do a good job. Staff wish to be recognized for the job they do. Suggestions include:
• Comprehensive training programs are needed in every unit. Training for new employees is especially critical. The university should offer a bridge program to allow overlap between employees as positions are filled in order to provide a training period for the new employee.
• Compensation, including merit, for classified and unclassified staff should be reviewed, particularly for “specialty” positions.
• The University should provide a specific process whereby staff could contribute ideas for changing procedures and forms to ensure more effective performance. Changes are made too often without consultation of those who are actually doing the work.
• Staff, in general, find that some State rules hinder their ability to contribute to quality service, and some rules encourage an environment of distrust between employee and supervisor. For example, leave policy to participate in meetings and governance activities limits participation. The university should explore the possibility of becoming independent of the state classified system or have the latitude to adjust state regulations and procedures to a university environment. In the interim, a review of classified rules should be undertaken to determine what suggestions the university might make to the State for change.
5. **Enhance Information Technologies.** The ability to provide the basic information technology infrastructure needed by students, faculty, and staff is impeded by the University’s bureaucratic structure. Future planning should provide a consistent funding base and the ability to offer services and equipment to all students, faculty, and staff in a comprehensive and coordinated way. Access to technology should be viewed as an equity issue. Some staff in technical areas such as the physical plant have been told they have no need for computers when, in fact, effectiveness and efficiency could be improved with such access. Technology exists to enhance both instruction and to deliver information outside the classroom. Emphasis on educating faculty in ways to use technology to enhance their teaching and their research is essential. One of the most promising uses of the Internet is the extension of the KU community beyond its home in Lawrence, Kansas, through on-line courses. Alumni, friends, and scholars can already log onto the KU home page for news and academic information. To improve the University’s ability to provide and maintain a system of information technology for all, the following suggestions are made:

- Under the direction of the Vice Chancellor for Information Services/Libraries, a study should be conducted to identify what is currently being done with information technology and to inventory equipment and services and their availability to the university community at large. This survey would serve as a benchmark for developing a university-wide information technology plan to reduce unnecessary duplication, make equipment and training more accessible, provide better repair services, and provide state-of-the-art technology for students, faculty, and staff in a cost-effective manner.

- On-line courses can enhance the KU curriculum provided they are of high quality and appropriate for the discipline. The University should further explore the use of the medium for instruction. Continuing Education programs should receive particular attention because the clientele for such programs are usually include individuals who are spread throughout the state and beyond.

- The technological aspects of applying, enrolling, and matriculating at KU must be improved. On-line catalogs and registration should be commonplace. As more nontraditional students enroll at KU, course scheduling that is consistent with their needs is desirable. The utilization of information technologies to conduct KU business, provide information, and enhance the campus culture should be encouraged.

6. **Improve Student Recruitment.** A consistent finding among students, faculty, and staff is that KU does not do as good a job as other universities in recruiting students. Faculty and staff repeatedly shared examples of the impersonal and passive nature of KU recruiting compared with that of other in-state and most out-of-state universities. Some students remarked that they were more actively
recruited by other in-state institutions. The initiative to attract the best high school students in the state to KU, such as National Merit Scholars, has improved and efforts should continue, but with greater vigor and a more personal flavor. New strategies are especially critical in recruitment of minority students. While recruitment of outstanding students and minority students is a priority, all students should be made to feel welcome and should be treated in a personal manner. The following recommendations address the recruitment issue:

- Review current recruitment and admissions strategies including an analysis of letters sent to potential students and accepted applicants. Incorporate some of the more creative recruitment methods used at other universities such as birthday cards sent to children of alumni on their 18th birthdays.
- Recruit ethnic minority students, faculty, and staff more aggressively. To realize this goal, commitment must be firm from the top (Chancellor) to the bottom (student recruiters, faculty search committees).
- KU should step up its efforts to recruit top-flight graduate students from a variety of cultural and national backgrounds.

7. Maintain Our Sense of Place. If KU is to survive in an age of electronic learning, then the Lawrence campus must be a place to which students want to come. The campus must be functional, aesthetically pleasing, and nurturing. Students must gain an educational benefit from being in a classroom setting or on a campus that they cannot get from computer-based instruction pursued alone or on-line class discussions. Some of what adds to the sense of place is the emphasis on learning which was addressed under the heading of “Focus on Education”; however, there are other recommendations to consider in making the Lawrence campus a desirable place to learn:

- As mentioned earlier in the report, a learning community is centered in the classroom. While the Crumbling Classrooms initiative has made some progress toward improving the condition of classrooms, laboratories, and workshops, too many of our classrooms and laboratories are not conducive to good teaching and learning. A plan to go beyond the Crumbling Classrooms improvements should be developed.
- All future building plans should ensure maintenance of green space. Landscaping strategies should be educational, as well as aesthetic, i.e., trees, shrubs, and flowers could be clearly labeled, and innovative landscape designs utilized to highlight both native and non-native species. Where possible, students should be involved in such projects.
- The regard of the university for its educational and research missions is directly reflected by the condition of its facilities. Clean, well-lit, and modern classrooms as well as functional, safe, and well-equipped laboratories must be provided.
• A comprehensive campus building audit and renovation plan is needed to maintain the integrity and beauty of the campus. Space utilization studies should be analyzed regularly, and poorly used space should be reassigned to units that can put it to better use.

• The University should bring together administratively Facilities Management, Design and Construction Management, and Facilities Operations under the Provost or in another way that ensure responsiveness to Lawrence campus needs.

• The University should provide and maintain high-quality services in areas such as health and recreation to provide for the physical well-being of students, faculty, and staff.

8. Change the KU Culture. As one respondent in a focus group stated, “for too long the culture at KU has been a surface civility which has masked a culture of blame.” Faculty and staff wish their university colleagues could be encouraged to think of the University as a whole and not be so focused upon their specific units. The medieval metaphor comparing KU to a collection of fiefdoms was heard frequently in discussions. Greater interdisciplinary collaboration on the Lawrence campus and among campuses as well as sharing of resources and technology is necessary to change the culture. Many members of the university community seek the ability to solve problems with fewer “rules” and bureaucracy in their way. They realize that some of those “rules” are functions of the state, but they also believe that many are functions of the University bureaucracy that can be changed. Duplication of efforts and functions and a lack of a clear sense of who is in charge of what produce frustration for students, faculty, and staff. The “KU way,” which often produces multiple groups or units studying the same issue with no communication among the groups and little or no resulting action, has created a climate of cynicism that efforts such as Initiative 2001 will produce little change. We recognize that change takes time. Efforts such as Initiative 2001 can make strides toward changing the climate if recommendations are implemented with continued student, faculty, and staff involvement. Thus the entirety of this report and those of the other task forces serve as the means to effect a change in the culture.
APPENDIX

The following are additional recommendations made by individuals or groups with whom the committee met. Some expand on ideas already discussed, others include suggestions more specific than those included in the report. All are important enough to be called to the attention of University administrators even if they are not related to strategic planning processes.

1. Focus on Education

! The University should take deliberate steps to ensure a wholesome social and cultural climate that reinforces good academic performance and personal development, taking into account the role that involvement in student programming can play in this area.

! The University should take any and all measures to maintain the rituals and traditions here at KU, as they add distinct flavor to the educational environment on campus. Senior surveys have often indicated that, despite the number of outstanding cultural opportunities available to the KU student, often for free or at reduced prices, many (if not most) students do not avail themselves to these opportunities. It has been suggested that faculty increase the inclusion of such activities into their course work. Incentives should be available to faculty interested in adding these kinds of experiences to their teaching portfolios.

! The University should support increased exposure to the visual and performing arts and campus museums through increased availability, affordability, and marketing of these programs. The university should make a concerted effort to identify funds to permit every graduate student on campus to address his or her research project in a modern and efficient way.

! Individual departments should ensure that mentorship is the most important aspect of the student experience.

2. Increase Diversity

! Provide counseling and training to place a stronger emphasis on multiculturalism in courses utilizing both the Multicultural Resource Center and the Center for Teaching Excellence.

! Create the Langston Hughes Center for African-American Studies. This center would be similar to other research institutes on campus that conduct research, sponsor visiting professors, initiate special programs and conduct summer institutes.

! Create a Chicano Studies Program.

! Improve accessibility to buildings and the location of parking spaces for wheelchair equipped vans. For example, the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities is housed in Strong Hall, which is one of the most inaccessible buildings on campus, especially for those who use vans.
3. Achieve a Balance Among Teaching, Research, and Service

! Salaries at KU are well-established as lagging behind peer institutions. This problem must be addressed to permit the retention of our best faculty and strongest academic contributors in a highly competitive marketplace.

! With respect to recognition of teaching, the Kemper Teaching Fellowship program is a great success but will only last another three years. What will replace it?

! Efforts to increase public awareness of the importance of teaching through seminars, teaching awards, and citations should continue.

! Expecting all faculty to become experts in computer instruction would be time-consuming and counterproductive by distracting teachers from teaching. KU should provide technical assistance to faculty who wish to enhance the use of computers in their courses, including hardware, software, and programming issues.

! New faculty need a more clearly established set of expectations regarding research performance. For departments in which outside funding is not readily available, or for mid-career faculty who might suffer a lapse in funding, other options for facilitating the continuation of worthy research programs need to be identified.

! Risky, but potentially high return research should be encouraged and nurtured.

! It is not cost-effective for faculty to do jobs for which they are not trained and which are better left to administrative professionals. This problem is particularly keen for academic administrators. It also does not make sense to “promote” a faculty member to departmental chair if it results in the loss of services of that individual as a teacher or researcher. Where possible, administrative assistants who report to unit directors should be hired to assist in the day-to-day operation of individual departments. Most service rendered by faculty should be limited to areas of their professional expertise.

4. Support Classified and Unclassified Staff

! All university employees should be asked to recognize staff contributions on a daily basis. Supervisors should work to eliminate indications of “status” within the working environment. Programs offered to faculty, such as Big 12 university exchanges, should be available to appropriate staff as well.

! The classified staff handbook should be readily available in printed form since many classified staff have no electronic access to documents.
5. Enhance Information Technologies

- Basic information regarding university policies, textbook orders, e-mail accounts, web services, etc., should be provided readily to all who need it.
- Although the Astute Center is praised for its efforts to educate faculty, improvement is needed in access to training for all groups on campus. Some believe that this training should be provided free of charge.
- All members of the university community should have a basic set of technology skills: electronic mail, basic word processing, Internet searching, and utilization of administrative systems such as ARTS forms.
- Access to technology for students with disabilities needs improvement.
- Faculty and staff need updated equipment and improvement of the campus network. Speed of network connections is identified as a particularly difficult problem. Conversely, procedures for getting rid of outdated equipment should be simplified.
- Improvements are needed for classroom equipment. (See the recent report submitted to the Provost on this issue).
- The University should bring together administratively the academic support services that are technology focused (Astute Center, Media Services, Budig Hall technology support services, and Academic Computing Services) under the Vice Chancellor for Information Services.
- A program to provide insurance for equipment is needed.
- The University should consider moving toward a central funding model for information technology similar to that used for the Libraries.
- Other methods of augmenting classroom materials using the web include giving students access to course syllabi, sample questions (often with hyperlink-enhanced answers and explanations), quizzes, and reference materials. Clearly, the scope of the Internet is expanding widely and is limited only by the vision of its users. The realization of the potential will only be possible through the efforts of its faculty.
- The university needs to ensure access to administrative computer systems.
- There was little enthusiasm from the students interviewed for Internet-based instruction. This might well be due to the relatively recent availability of the medium. Still, there are ways that computer-transmitted instruction could make an immediate impact at KU. Many faculty noted that students are increasingly using e-mail in addition to traditional visits during office hours. Simply ensuring that every student has access to an e-mail account and a computer will have the greatest immediate impact by improving student-professor communication. Students should receive an e-mail address at the same time they receive a Student Identification Number.
- The UDK should provide a regular, weekly space for all educationally related announcements free of charge. Students would be held accountable for all printed information.
Action should be taken to ensure that all members of the KU community have easy access to electronic mail. This should include campus-wide standards that permit all members of the community to send and receive e-mail from all other members.

The Oread is the main source for campus announcements and news for faculty and staff. Incorporating more event information in order to decrease the mailing of individual flyers would save staff time and supplies.

The campus is not yet in a position to have all announcements and news available on-line. Too many staff do not have the technology needed to access such information. Interactive kiosks in every building could provide information to visitors as well as to students, faculty, and staff.

Campus units should improve strategies for off-line dissemination of information to all staff, faculty, and students. Bulletin boards devoted to campus news should be clearly displayed and updated regularly.

The current phone books need to be revised to include office locations, not just the name of the office. On-line directories should be revised to include basic information about how, when, and where to reach every employee of the university. Provide a “Yellow Pages” in the KU directory to better assist faculty and staff in locating needed services. Develop a research and teaching expertise section similar to ProfNet to enable faculty to work better with colleagues across the campus with similar interests.

An up-to-date, comprehensive arts, athletic, and cultural events calendar is needed to consolidate all of this information into one place. This could be published as a weekly pull-out section of either the Oread or the UDK or both. KU’s web page should be redesigned to be more informative and with a better system of links.

Students should be able to do everything in a streamlined “one-stop-shopping” place in Strong Hall. In order for this to be effective, however, the accessibility of Strong Hall to students with disabilities must be improved.

Advice on the multiple ways of acquiring equipment that ensures the best possible purchase within the purchasing guidelines should be available through an easy to contact service.

The library was cited by many students as a valuable asset, but continued vigilance is necessary to ensure that the increasing cost of journals and books does not erode its usefulness. The increasing availability of items such as KU Uncover and other research tools can help, but maintaining the permanent collection on site must remain a priority.

The library should review the process utilized to collect library fines with an eye toward improving the effectiveness of the process.

6. Improve Student Recruitment

No additional items.
7. Maintain Our Sense of Place

- Access to many facilities is limited because of restricted hours. The variable work schedule of staff should be taken into account when establishing operational schedules for buildings.
- Better security is needed in most campus buildings to protect both people and property.
- The availability of standard classroom equipment, ranging from clean chalkboards to overhead projectors to multimedia equipment, is also in need of significant and immediate improvement.
- All buildings should be clearly identifiable on maps located throughout campus. Signage near the entryways of buildings is particularly important. It should include the name of the building and the departments or services housed in the building. More needs to be done to inform students, staff, and visitors about the history of our campus and its buildings. Historical buildings should be labeled as such, with informational signs.
- Ensure that resources for repairs are spent on long-term solutions rather than short-term, stop-gap repairs. Patching up old systems to keep them marginally functional is causing more problems.
- Regardless of growth to the west, expanding KU on Wheels routes in that direction is not feasible. Patrons will not ride the bus longer than 20 minutes, and buses could not complete routes in less than that time. Therefore, investigate the possibility of a park and ride system utilizing existing unused parking at the Lied Center, for example, and providing patrons with a shuttle bus to campus. Bus stops and shelters near the Lied Center are needed to make this work. The University and students should form a partnership to better coordinate park and ride opportunities.
- Support additional green space on campus and restrict automobiles from Jayhawk Boulevard.
- Support additional bicycle lanes in coordination with the city's efforts in this area. Add bicycle security (e.g. bike racks and lock-up areas).
- Support seeking federal, state, and local funding for implementing the bicycle plan proposed in the Campus Transportation Plan.
- The Liftvan service may be more cost-effective and provide a better service if KU on Wheels shifted that operation to Douglas County Area Transportation (DCAT). If this idea will not work, Liftvan needs to purchase a new van to serve its patrons more effectively.
- The Campus Transportation Fee was recently given a $2.00 per semester increase. This additional money, given to improve Saferide, will nearly double its current budget. The possibility exists to expand the hours of operation and/or allow for point-to-point service on campus. This would improve campus safety as those who requested the service could, for instance, ride Saferide from the Library to their cars.
- The University should attempt to ensure that most freshmen and sophomores live in some type of organized housing. Future housing constructed by the University should be only of the small group living type.
More and better-trained staff are needed to maintain the physical plant. More attention should be
given to maintaining a high morale among Facilities Operations staff by providing them with more
opportunities for participation in the university’s mission.

Modern libraries, laboratories, and other facilities contribute significantly to the quality of learning.
It is also essential that laboratories be brought to rigorous compliance with modern safety
guidelines.

A major university should have a conference center with hotel facilities. This facility could also
serve the function of providing social space for faculty and other staff who cite the lack of a faculty
club as a hindrance to community building and collaboration. This might be a joint venture with a
private hotel chain.

8. Change the KU Culture

All cultural event sponsors need to find ways for members of the campus community who cannot
afford tickets to events to participate. For instance, many classified staff cannot afford the cost of
Lied Center productions. Economical access is needed for staff and students.

Rules affecting students should be consistent across the College and schools as much as possible.

Faculty and staff are frustrated with the purchasing process. They seek improvements in the
purchasing process that will enable them to quickly and easily obtain the equipment they need for
their teaching and research.

The majority of faculty and staff perform their jobs in an exemplary fashion. However, some feel
that they are often not properly rewarded, recognized, and thanked. Internal and external
documents calling for greater accountability and efficiency, more attention to teaching, etc., refer to
a small percentage of faculty and staff. There was a sense among some of the individuals
interviewed that post-tenure review and performance appraisals provide the means to deal with the
minority, and that those tools should be used more effectively.

The University should seek ways to empower employees who are willing to contribute in positive
ways. We should reward risk taking, even when it results in failure. We should learn to “fail
forward” knowing that we learn as much from failure as from success.
Building a Premier Learning Community--Lawrence
Executive Summary

Overview of Charge and Definition of a Premier Learning Community

The strategic challenge for the Lawrence campus of the University of Kansas is to enhance the nature of students’ educational experiences by building on our historic strengths as a major research university and by adapting to a changing educational environment. The growing importance of information technologies and the rapid expansion of new knowledge require the university to deliver education through both time-proven methods and new technologies. Fostering research and scholarly inquiry to create new knowledge and guiding students’ acquisition of research and learning methods necessary to adapt within a rapidly-changing world are essential goals of both undergraduate and graduate education.

As a premier learning community, the Lawrence campus should support and inspire the intellectual and personal development of all community members--students, faculty, and staff. While technology creates a borderless world, a university rooted in place is still necessary for a complete educational experience that prepares students to live in a diverse and dynamic society. The value-added dimensions of a diverse research university cannot be replaced by solitary learning. Learning occurs both inside and outside of classrooms and laboratories and through participation in social and cultural events on the campus and within the larger Lawrence and Kansas communities. The university’s size and the increasing numbers of students living off campus necessitate a comprehensive support system for students, faculty, and staff to maintain a sense of community. The university must assess the rising costs of higher education and determine how best to integrate traditional and technology-based learning to provide high quality, cost-efficient instruction. In meeting the challenges of a new era of education, the task force identified eight overriding issues to address in future planning: focus on education; increase diversity; achieve a balance among teaching, research, and service; support classified and unclassified staff; enhance information technologies; improve student recruitment; maintain our sense of place; and change the KU culture. Recommendations for each are summarized.

Challenges and Suggestions for Future Planning

1. **Focus on Education.** Learning should be the primary business of a university. Most students believe they receive a high quality education at KU, but also cite areas for improvement. The university’s role as a major research institution distinguishes it from smaller liberal arts universities.
Thus, research should enhance not compete with instructional goals. All students should engage in meaningful research appropriate to their disciplines, and faculty should do more to incorporate their own research into their teaching. Advising and mentoring are key components to academic success for all students. Maintaining the affordability of a KU education is also seen as essential, especially if students are to be able to work less and concentrate on learning.

2. Increase Diversity. Diversity is defined in its broadest sense. While there is a commitment to increased diversity by the central administration, more needs to be done to make it a reality. Enhancement of diversity in all areas of the curriculum and the social and a cultural climate is needed as well as support for special needs students.

3. Achieve a Balance Among Teaching, Research, and Service. The three categories need to be viewed as complementary and interrelated rather than as distinctive and competitive. It is recommended that a study of promotion and tenure be conducted for the purpose of reviewing and updating current instruments, definitions, and expectations. Mentoring for new faculty to assist them in the classroom and utilization of the Center for Teaching Excellence can enhance the quality of teaching. Additional assistance with grant preparation and administration is essential to maintain high quality research.

4. Support Classified and Unclassified Staff. Staff is an essential part of the KU community. As such, they need comprehensive training, an appropriate performance evaluation system, fair compensation, consultation when changes are made affecting them, and a set of State rules that do not hinder their ability to contribute.

5. Enhance Information Technologies. The demands for technology as well as their costs necessitate an information technology infrastructure that is comprehensive, well-funded, and coordinated across the campus and among the other campuses. Technology should enhance the sense of community and improve communication. It should be used to expand the university’s presence and impact beyond the campus.

6. Improve Student Recruitment. There is widespread perception that KU does not do as good a job of recruiting as other universities. A review of recruitment strategies and documents is suggested as well as a more aggressive program to recruit ethnic minority students, faculty, and staff.

7. Maintain Our Sense of Place. If KU is to survive in an age of electronic learning, the Lawrence campus must continue to be an attractive place to learn. The campus must be functional, aesthetically pleasing, and nurturing. Facilities need to be maintained and updated.
8. **Change the KU Culture.** Faculty and staff who were surveyed wish their university colleagues would think of the University as a whole and not be so focused upon their specific units. Greater interdisciplinary collaboration on the Lawrence campus and among campuses as well as sharing of resources and technology is necessary to change the current culture. Efforts such as Initiative 2001 can assist in changing the culture so long as all members of the community have an opportunity for input and active participation in carrying out recommendations.