



Final Report

University of Kansas

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**Documenting Effective Educational Practice (Project DEEP)
FINAL REPORT**

University of Kansas

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose and Overview

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE) are working together on an initiative to identify and describe the policies, practices, and cultures of colleges and universities that are unusually effective in promoting student success. With support from Lumina Foundation for Education and the Wabash College Center of Inquiry in the Liberal Arts, the Documenting Effective Educational Practice (DEEP) project features case studies of about twenty colleges and universities that have higher-than-predicted scores on five clusters or “benchmarks” of effective educational practice and also higher-than-expected graduation rates. The benchmarks are based on how students respond to the questions on the National Survey of Student Engagement. The benchmarks are academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student-faculty interaction, enriching educational experiences, and supportive campus environment. Appendix A contains additional information about the benchmarks and the NSSE project.

The institutions selected for the DEEP project reflect the diversity of four-year institutions, including large universities, small colleges, urban universities, and special mission institutions. Our aim is to discover and document what these institutions do, and to the extent feasible, how they have achieved this measure of effectiveness. Then, we intend to share with other colleges and universities the educational practices that seem to work in a variety of different settings with different groups of learners and to further our understanding of how institutions of higher education can modify their policies and practices to promote student success. The major findings from the project will be reported in a monograph and other vehicles by NSSE and AAHE. Additional information is available on the web: <http://www.iub.edu/~nsse>

Methods

The conceptual framework guiding our work is anchored by a concept called “student engagement.” Although the importance of student engagement has been known for years, many colleges and universities have not had good information about the student experience to know where to best direct their resources and energy to improve undergraduate education. Since 2000, more than 730 different institutions of higher education have turned to the NSSE to learn more about this important dimension of the undergraduate experience.

Student engagement represents two critical features. The first is the amount of time and effort students put into their studies and other educationally purposeful activities. The second is how the institution deploys its resources and organizes the curriculum, other learning opportunities, and support services to induce students to participate in activities that lead to the experiences and outcomes that constitute student success (persistence, satisfaction, learning and graduation). The latter feature is of particular interest, as it represents the margin of educational quality that institutions

contribute – a measure of value added – and something that a college or university can influence to some degree. NSSE benchmark results were used to help us identify Project DEEP schools. While the NSSE data provide a useful structure for our work, they are not the only topics of interest in this study.

A time-honored approach to improving productivity is the identification and adaptation of qualities that characterize high-performing organizations. In a similar way, virtually all institutions of higher education can learn valuable lessons from educationally effective colleges. Toward this end, we used a case study approach to learn as much as possible about your school and the other DEEP colleges and universities. We visited the University of Kansas (KU) twice. The first was December 8 -11, 2002. The second visit was April 20-21, 2003. Prior to and during the site visits, team members reviewed many pertinent print and web documents about KU. Deborah Teeter, University Director of Institutional Research and Planning, and her staff coordinated our visit schedules and campus tours and arranged meetings with a diverse group of faculty, students, and administrators. In all, we met individually or in focus groups with more than 110 students, faculty, administrators, and others. Following the first visit, the team prepared an Interim Report. The report was distributed widely prior to our second visit to the campus. Our primary goal for the second visit was to further our understanding of KU and to correct factual errors and questionable interpretations in the Interim Report. To do this, we met with small groups to discuss the report with an eye toward better understanding aspects of undergraduates' experiences at KU that were not adequately depicted in the Interim Report. We also met with some additional people who helped clarify particular elements of institutional policies and practices. We then revised the KU Report to incorporate these additional insights and findings. Information about the DEEP researchers who participated in the visits is provided in Appendix B.

We are grateful for the cooperation of the KU students, faculty, staff and others who shared their time and insights during our first visit. We are especially indebted to Deb Teeter who arranged our interview schedule and attended to many other details to make our visit productive and enjoyable.

Guiding Principles

Three principles guided our work and the preparation of this Report.

First, the goal of Project DEEP is to document and describe effective educational practice. We are interested in understanding what works well in engaging different types of students at high levels and how the institution achieved its success. We are less interested in identifying institutional weaknesses, though we realize that even high performing schools can improve in certain areas. As a result, we attempted to emphasize descriptive statements about the University of Kansas.

Second, we attempted to be inclusive and to learn the views of as many different groups as time would allow. Whenever possible we sought out people who we were told might have different or divergent perspectives on the student experience.

Third, our goal was to understand KU as students, faculty, staff and other “insiders” experience university life.

We submit this report with two caveats. The first is that we are certain to have not fully captured everything worth knowing about the University. We are mindful that at best this report provides only a snapshot of a moving target; that is, some of what may have been issues at one point in time may now be settled, and new issues may have emerged. Second, in instances where we have misinterpreted factual matters we want to be notified so that we may correct these errors.

Overview of the Report

This Report is organized into four sections. First, relevant aspects of KU’s history and institutional context are introduced, followed by a discussion of general themes related to effective educational practices. Then, information illuminating and supporting the benchmarks is discussed. The report concludes with a section with some thoughts about the quality of the undergraduate experience at the University.

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Founded in 1864, the University of Kansas (KU) was one of the first universities on the Great Plains. Classes were first held in 1866. The original campus was on the north end of Mount Oread with a spectacular view of the Kaw and Wakarusa river valleys. Today, one can appreciate the majestic views from the hill and ridges around Mount Oread where the campus is nestled. One senior faculty member likened it to a Moorish castle on a hill. The main campus is in the city of Lawrence, a vibrant, medium size (80,000 population) college town, known for its arts scene and specialty shops, coffee houses and restaurants. Owing to its attractive setting “on the hill,” KU has a distinctive “sense of place” that instills school pride and an excitement about learning. Students repeatedly mentioned the physical beauty of the campus and especially appealing places such as Jayhawk Boulevard as significant to their educational experience.

The history of the region and state has left its mark on the ethos of the University. During the early decades of the University’s existence, agrarian-based Populism, one of the largest democratic mass movements in American history, swept through the Plains states. Populism took root in Kansas, and Kansans were often viewed in the forefront of this national humanitarian reform. The state was seen as a land of opportunity where people paved a path for others in the nation to follow. According to some KU administrators and faculty, Populism still fuels the promotion of equity and diversity on campus and the emphasis on self-governance and representation, and accounts for the governance structures that exist to insure that the voices of students, faculty members, classified staff, and unclassified staff are heard and respected.

The history and ambience of Lawrence also have a non-trivial influence on the attitudes and norms of campus life. Home to the abolitionists who survived Quantrill’s raid and the well-known African-American poet Langston Hughes, the town is open to newcomers who shared similar democratic values. The egalitarian, Populist roots run deep which makes for a curious self-conscious ambivalence about aspiring to excellence - or at least being too public about it. It is not that Kansans do not want to be known for something, or for KU to be thought of as the “Harvard on the Kaw.” In fact, as a long-time faculty member told us, “the inherent inferiority of Populism drives us to be distinctive.” In part, it is how one becomes “known” that is the issue. Being distinctive because of good works and good deeds is acceptable, but making too much of one’s accomplishments, or that of the University, is not considered “the Kansan way” – unless intercollegiate basketball is the issue.

Mission and Philosophy

The institutional mission identifies five main areas in which the University strives to excel: instruction, service, research, internationalism, and humanitarian values. Outstanding library collections, teaching museums, and information technology complement and enrich classroom instruction. Research and teaching are declared to be “mutually reinforcing with scholarly inquiry underlying and informing the educational

experience at undergraduate, professional, and graduate levels.”¹ An emphasis on international experience helps to prepare students to become citizens in an increasingly diverse global community. Finally, the mission reflects the University’s commitment to excellence and to fostering a multicultural environment in order to promote the respect and dignity of all individuals. All this is done in the context of a research-intensive institution.

Of the 11 schools with undergraduate programs, four directly admit new students: the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS), the School of Architecture and Urban Design, the School of Engineering, and the School of Fine Arts. About half of all KU students earn their degrees from the College of Liberal Arts and Science. The remaining schools – Allied Health, Business, Education, Journalism, Nursing, Pharmacy and Social Welfare – require students to take prerequisite courses through the CLAS prior to admission.

Students

Of KU’s 20,000 undergraduates, one-third are not from Kansas. About 5,000 students live on campus. KU operates residence halls, scholarship halls, and apartment complexes. The residence halls offer: honors program floors, creative arts hall, and a leadership, community service, and diversity program. About 500 students elect to live in scholarship halls, known as “schol halls.” Scholarship halls emphasize cooperative living where everyone shares cooking and household responsibilities in exchange for reduced costs for room and board. To continue living in a schol hall, students must complete at least 28 credit hours during the academic year and earn a minimum 2.5 grade point average. In addition, each hall awards at least one scholarship based on academic achievement, citizenship or leadership. Almost a fifth of the undergraduate population belongs to a fraternity or sorority. Forty-five fraternities and sororities operate chapters at KU and 31 have chapter houses.

KU followed an open admissions policy until Fall 2001. That meant that every Kansas high school graduate was eligible for KU admission. As a result, students with often-minimal college preparation could enroll. Although this could dampen academic expectations and challenge, this did not happen for a number of reasons, including the fact that prospective students perceive KU to be the most challenging state university in Kansas. In fact, students told us KU’s academic reputation was the primary reason they chose to attend the University and that many of their less well-prepared friends went to other colleges. Nonetheless, administrators indicated that more than half of the first-year student attrition is due to academic failure. The University is working to reduce this number. First, admission standards have been established, so students who are clearly not prepared for the level of challenge at KU will have to seriously consider improving their credentials at other institutions. Under the “qualified admissions” criteria (mandated by the Board of Regents and introduced in Fall 2001) in-state students must

¹ (<http://www.ur.ku.edu/Admin/About/KUmission.html>)

meet one of the following criteria to be admitted: ACT scores of 21 or SAT of at least 980; graduate in the top one third of his/her class; 2.0 GPA in the Kansas college-prep curriculum. KU chose higher requirements for out-of-state applicants. Nonresidents must earn an ACT score of 24 or SAT of 1090 with a 2.0 grade point average, or graduate in the top one third of their class, or earn a 2.5 in a college-prep curriculum. The average ACT score for entering first-year students in 2001 was 24.5, about two-and-a half points above the national average. In 2001, KU ranked among the top ten public universities in new National Merit scholars, enrolling more than all other public universities in Kansas and Missouri combined, and in 2002, enrolling 100 National Merit Scholars, as well as 18 National Hispanic Scholars and one National Achievement Scholar (The University of Kansas, 2002-2004 Undergraduate Catalog).

Faculty

With a faculty to student ratio of 15:1, KU strives to promote the nature and frequency of student-faculty interaction that is not typical of large research universities. There is also a strong ethic that faculty members provide individual attention and support to students, a reflection of KU's background and history. Extensive mentoring for faculty and students, financial support from administration to support faculty-student conducted research, and a Center for Teaching Excellence are a few of the mechanisms in place to further promote teaching excellence and collegiality within the University.

ELEMENTS OF EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

The purpose of our visit to KU was to identify and document distinctive qualities that contribute to the institution's high performance on the five NSSE benchmarks of effective educational practice. Although this report focuses on these benchmarks, we begin by discussing three distinctive institutional characteristics that transcend the specific benchmarks: (1) KU's collegial environment, (2) an emphasis on undergraduate teaching, and (3) traditions and culture. These themes emerged from our interviews with KU faculty, students, and staff; campus observations; and review of many institutional documents including the student handbook and undergraduate catalog as well as numerous web pages that display information about KU students and programs.

A Collegial Environment

The collegial character of KU is key to a variety of desirable educational outcomes among students including leadership, interaction with faculty, and ease in adjusting to the college environment. There is an open, positive relationship between students and faculty characterized by respect and genuine appreciation. Administrators and faculty members described the University as a place where collegiality, trust, and positive working relationships among people have established an atmosphere of collaboration and cooperation. In fact, the word "family" is often used to describe the atmosphere and nature of the relationships that exist on campus. At the same time, family members do not always see things the same way. For example, some warn against overstating the sense of collegiality, that KU like other large complex organizations have

some “silos made of concrete,” suggesting that it is difficult at times to cross institutional boundaries that are rooted in a research university culture that values autonomy and independent thinking. As a senior faculty member explained it, KU was “radically decentralized in the 1970s,” with each school operating independent from the others. Efforts have been made to “sew the pieces together,” at least to the extent that administrators and faculty members understand and appreciate the interrelationships among the various parts. The continuing challenge in promoting cooperation is not necessarily a structural flaw or a result of ineffective leadership; rather, the amount of energy to surmount inertia and organizational complexity can sometimes be overwhelming, which discourages some people from trying.

People frequently referred to doing things the “Kansas Way,” which has multiple interpretations. One is the norm that “we all give up a little to make the place better as a whole.” Another is an “insidious fondness for Jayhawks,” in the words of one long-time faculty member. Yet another interpretation is that KU “creates an environment in which the student feels comfortable.” One faculty member said it well: “KU is remarkably sensitive to student issues.” For example, KU has a long-standing tradition as a place that expects students to have a voice in campus governance. University regulations require that all policy committees (with the exception of the personnel committee) have a minimum of 20% student representation. As one student senate officer commented, “Students are on an equal playing field with faculty and others in terms of governance.” Clearly, students and their “voices” are very important at the University.

In addition, administrators and faculty members embrace an ethic of “going out of your way.” Everyone pulls together in a fiscally challenged climate and staff stretched thin to deliver existing programs. One professor believed that his colleagues were willing to “give up a little from their own area, if the final decision aided the entire University.” There is a very strong sense that “we are all in this together.” This attitude, combined with a willingness to think broadly about the nature of education, adds to an atmosphere of engagement and involvement among students, faculty, and administrators. As mentioned at the outset, the origins of this thread in the KU culture may be a historical artifact of being located in a Populist State. Another aspect of this is an ethic whereby people are encouraged to find ways to circumvent whatever obstacles the “system” presents to students.

In response to hard financial times, resources such as staff time are shared among offices to creatively solve fiscal problems as well as add to the spirit of cooperation and collaboration. One administrator commented on the challenges of a being a large university, “Collaboration is tough because you have a lot on your plate...but there’s a spirit of collaboration.” This ethic of cooperation and collaboration further promotes and supports the value that students come first and are important, valued participants in the life of the University. Indeed, collegiality translates into accessibility and “voice” for students due to the “open” environment. Students remarked on and understood the relationship between campus decision-making involvement and campus connection. A senior put it this way, “I have a greater love for KU because I have a better understanding of how it works.”

Shared governance is a point of pride at KU and is, arguably, a major reason why collaboration and cooperation flourish. A faculty member is always the president of the 50 member elected University Council; a student is always the vice president. A similar arrangement is in place for the Senate. As a result, one long-time faculty member told us, there is a tradition of students running meetings when the faculty chair is absent. And it is not uncommon for grassroots issues to bubble up and later become policy, which is what happened recently in terms of a tuition enhancement plan (which was backed by student leaders) and adoption of a course repeat policy. Within the past few years classified and unclassified staff also have been represented.

Shared governance also works well at KU because the culture is “respectful of administrators” as one faculty member put it. Equally important, the campus enjoys strong leadership and support from the upper administration, particularly the Provost. Many people with whom we talked mentioned their respect for the Provost; as one Associate Dean put it: “I don’t know anyone who doesn’t trust the Provost.” Another person commented, “The Provost is extraordinary.” This collegial character translates into a non-competitive atmosphere among campus participants. A Dean concluded, “I never have a sense that I’m competing with the other Deans for their or our money.”

An Emphasis on Undergraduate Teaching

Over the last decade, high quality undergraduate instruction has been increasingly emphasized at KU. This has come about, we were told by faculty members and senior administrators, as a result of a deliberate effort to “change the faculty ethos related to teaching.” There is a consistent message coming from the highest administrative levels that “good teaching matters.” The Provost’s philosophy is that effective teaching complements good research and vice versa. He has built support for this approach because the faculty “knows that he will listen and that he understands the culture.”

The Senior Vice Provost confirmed that there now is a “strong commitment on the part of faculty to their students as much as their research.” The emphasis on teaching is manifested in a number of institutional practices and norms, resulting in improved teaching and learning at all levels – from introductory to capstone courses – and students now expect a more challenging academic experience. The emphasis has had a profound effect on the caliber of teaching – and hence, the level of academic challenge – at KU. The shift in orientation and values began with senior faculty, those who are making tenure and promotion decisions. The message is reinforced by the fact that all executive administrators teach at least one class per year. One faculty member enthusiastically pointed out, “Even the Chancellor teaches. This symbolizes our commitment to undergraduate teaching!”

The faculty members with whom we spoke confirmed that teaching is now even more important in recruitment, promotion, and tenure decisions, in departments and in the university-wide committee. One long-time faculty member remarked that this constituted a “sea-change” from several decades ago, a shift many readily agree was championed by the Provost. A senior administrator noted that in the 1980s, new tenure-

track faculty members were told not to worry about teaching, but to focus on research. Currently, faculty are joining what the Senior Vice Provost termed a “tradition of high quality undergraduate teaching, especially in liberal arts.” Now, after new faculty members arrive on campus, the message is reiterated; new faculty orientation sets the tone that teaching is valued.

KU tries to assign experienced teachers to lower division and introductory courses. In some cases, this means that senior faculty members and other experienced teachers are teaching introductory courses, rather than the common practice of assigning these courses to less-experienced junior faculty or graduate students. These classes are typically students’ first classes and establish the expectations for subsequent courses. Even so, most students probably will have two or three graduate student instructors in their first semester, usually in English composition and foreign language courses, one administrator told us.

Another University-wide teaching excellence priority, traced to the central administration, is improved mentoring and training for graduate teaching assistants (GTAs). When graduate students unionized a decade ago, the administration included contract provisions stipulating that all GTAs be trained and have a faculty “teaching mentor” in their department with whom they can consult. Two other issues existed with the GTAs. One was the percentage of classes they were teaching and the other was their connection to the rest of the faculty. They constituted 33% of the instructional faculty FTE in 1989, compared with an average of 25% at most research universities. The Provost’s office set a goal of getting down to the research university average. Today KU is at the average. Even so, some students believe that “there are too many GTAs teaching” survey courses and “too many teach from the book.” Others are quick to point out that many GTAs do a much better job than they publicly “get credit for,” perhaps in part because of the preparation they receive before going into the classroom.

Another manifestation of KU’s commitment to undergraduate education is a conscious effort to keep enrollments small in a high percentage of undergraduate courses. In fact, 80% of undergraduate classes have 30 or fewer students, and 93% have 50 or fewer students (*Preview KU 2003*). According to an academic administrator, the “proportion of classes enrolling under 30 students is high; we can afford this because we have really large classes that offset the cost of having smaller classes.”

Another significant institutional marker of the importance of teaching is the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE). Founded in 1997, the CTE serves the following functions:

- Provide opportunities for teaching faculty to discuss students’ learning and ways to enhance it in their classrooms;
- Advocate and recognize teaching excellence;
- Support faculty as they implement their ideas for improving students’ learning;
- Bring research about teaching to the attention of the university community;
- Encourage involvement in the scholarship of teaching and research on learning;

- Offer course development assistance at any stage: planning, teaching, evaluating;
- Foster instructional innovation.

The CTE sponsors a wide variety of programs and services. These include a “teaching summit” held each fall before classes begin (typically 350 of 1,000 faculty members participate); a Best Practices Institute (two-day experience for 10 new faculty); Faculty Seminars, in which faculty members meet to discuss readings in the scholarship of teaching; Faculty Fellows and Teaching Grant programs, both of which provide grants for research aimed at improving teaching; and support for Graduate Teaching Assistants (including a day-long symposium on teaching for GTAs at the beginning of the school year).

A faculty member indicated that she has been “pleased with the availability of funds to support teaching including the Center for Teaching Excellence funding programs and the Instructional Development funds that departments apply for annually.” She was involved in creating a request for Instructional Development funds to improve the teaching facilities for a lab course in speech and hearing. The subsequent award allowed the department to create a state of the art learning laboratory where students have critical hands-on experience and demonstrations. Another faculty member complemented the CTE for its role in enhancing teaching with technology and getting upgraded technology in classrooms.

The CTE also sponsors the Faculty Ambassador program. Ambassadors are representatives from each department/division and serve as liaisons between CTE and their departments. They are advocates for the University’s teaching mission and typically enjoy the respect of their colleagues for their teaching. They articulate faculty needs and concerns to the Center and give their departmental/division perspectives. The Ambassadors are kept informed about CTE programs and services, and several lead discussions on instructional issues. In addition, the Teaching Excellence Advisory Members (TEAM) serves as the advisory board for the Center for Teaching Excellence. With representatives from most schools and from CLAS, TEAM provides a forum for shared decision-making between the Center and its constituencies. Members help CTE develop and implement its strategies, services, and programs.

Beyond these programs, the CTE functions, as one faculty member put it, “as a visible symbol of the importance that KU places on good teaching.” Faculty described the staff as helpful, always available, collegial and the Center as user-friendly. Even if its programs are not as directly effective as one might hope, a faculty member suggested that the presence of the CTE serves as a clear indication that the University values and encourages good teaching. But, from the perspective of one dean, many of the CTE programs *are* effective. According to this dean, the CTE “coalesces certain needs and brings them into a common focus.”

Finally, good teaching is publicly rewarded at KU. Annually, a number of faculty members, selected by their students, are honored at the Teacher Appreciation Banquet. This event, sponsored by the CTE, usually recognizes 50-60 faculty members. The

University sponsors a number of teaching awards, including the Fink award and the Chancellor's Club Teaching Professorship (10 named annually). Each of these awards includes a substantial monetary award. The HOPE award (one per year) recipient is selected by the senior class and presented at halftime of a football game. Although all teaching awards carry genuine respect and prestige, some are highly regarded because of the substantial monetary awards associated with them. Many students and faculty told us about the "surprise patrol" that awards \$5,000 to 20 unsuspecting faculty members on the first day of class.² As one faculty member observed, the awards signify the value placed on excellent teaching. Another told us that students hear the message, "KU has created a climate where teaching is valued. [For example, checks for the Kemper award are presented in class to outstanding teachers.] Students take teaching and learning more seriously as a result." The large number of teaching awards available also means that they are realizable goals for faculty, not just pie-in-the-sky long shots, and therefore worth working for.

Data-Driven Decision Making

KU faculty, staff, and administration extensively use data to effect campus organizational change, solve problems, and make decisions. The Office of Institutional Research and Planning collects a wide array of data and institutional reports, which reflects the institution's commitment to drawing on information for policy formation and decision making. Using results from the General Education Assessment, Student Perceptions Survey, NSSE, and Senior Survey, the administration feeds data back to the community and have used the data to change advising practices, curriculum requirements, and administrative structures. In the words of the Provost, "Data drive most of the things we do." The General Education Assessment Interviews described more fully in the next section is a wonderful way for faculty to "sit across" from and learn from students. According to one administrator, the interaction has a big effect that goes beyond the data.

Traditions and Culture

KU has a "legacy of excellence" built upon a reputation passed between generations, among siblings, and through local Kansas lore. KU was described to us as "steeped in traditions." Many of these traditions (particularly academically related ones) build school pride, create an environment of academic success, and connect students to the campus community. Students told us they knew about many of the traditions before they arrived on campus, as they were passed down from family members and friends who attended the University. Some are well known throughout the state.

² The W.T. Kemper Fellowships for Teaching Excellence recognize outstanding teachers and advisers at KU as determined by a seven-member selection committee. The awards were established by a \$500,000 fund from the William T. Kemper Foundation-Commerce Bank, Trustee, and \$500,000 in matching funds from the KU Endowment Association. The 2003 Kemper award is the eighth year of a ten-year program.

“Hawk Week,” a week of events for all students, faculty and staff, including programs to help acquaint students with KU and its traditions, is one formal way KU traditions are transmitted and reinforced. One of the popular events is “Traditions Night,” where more than 3,000 students typically gather in the football stadium to rehearse the Rock Chalk Chant, listen to stories about the legend of the Jayhawk, and learn the “I’m a Jayhawk” school song. The Jayhawk is the campus mascot, a mythical bird; various interpretations exist about its origin. Among the more popular is that it represents the historic struggles of Kansas settlers:

“The term ‘Jayhawk’ was probably coined about 1848...the name combines two birds—the blue jay, a noisy, quarrelsome thing known to rob other nests, and the sparrow hawk, a stealthy hunter. The message here: Do not turn your back on this bird” (*Student Handbook and Planner, 2002-2003*, p. 20).

During the 1850s, the Jayhawk was a symbol of those committed to keeping Kansas a Free State. Since this time, the Jayhawk has been synonymous with an impassioned people. The image is powerful for most in the KU community. A KU administrator declared, “Once a Jayhawk, always a Jayhawk.”

Another well-known tradition is the importance prior to graduation of walking around – not through – the campanile that overlooks Potter Lake and Memorial Stadium. A long walkway stretches from the top of the hill, down through the campanile, to the football stadium. First-year students hear about the tradition of walking around the campanile during Traditions Night. Graduating seniors walk through the campanile on the way to the football stadium and graduation. Local campus lore says that if a student walks down the hill and through the campanile before graduation, he or she will never graduate from KU. An admissions tour guide told a group of visiting students that he would not dare walk through the campanile until he earned the right to walk through at commencement. According to one administrator, “the school is very direct about building graduation into Traditions Night.” KU also emphasizes the importance of graduating from KU through the ritual of recognizing generations of Jayhawks. Students who are first through fifth generation Jayhawks are asked to stand and be recognized. In addition, a torch is passed from a senior to a representative of the first-year class (representatives are usually 4th or 5th generation Jayhawks). Several students mentioned that the campanile represents high aspirations and seeing students walking through the campanile at commencement is an academic achievement ritual, inspiring them to work even harder.

One highly visible pastime among KU students is newspaper reading. In academic buildings throughout campus, particularly in the large classroom building, Wescoe Hall, we found most students sitting on hallway floors reading newspapers as they waited between classes. During the warm spring day of our campus visit, students were sitting in the grass and on benches reading *The University Daily Kansan* or any one of the papers provided through KU’s participation in the Newspaper Readership

Program³. Newspapers are widely available on campus. Distribution boxes are located near campus bus stops, and in the main lobby of most buildings. “Everyone picks up a copy of the *Kansan* as they file off the campus buses,” explained a student “Most of the campus reads the paper...it’s part of campus culture to read the paper,” asserted a senior. A staff member at the *Kansan* stated that “independent market research shows more than 90% of KU students read the campus newspaper at least once a week.” KU participates in the University Readership program so other papers are also available “free” to students (paid for through student fees).

The University Daily Kansan is a source of pride for students and staff. Started in 1904 as the *Semi-Weekly Kansan*, it became the responsibility of students in newspaper classes in 1905. The current-day *Kansan* staff are proud that the paper has continued to be the responsibility of students, exclaiming that the paper is “entirely student run.” A *Kansan* staff writer explained, “other campus papers emulate ‘adult papers’ and run a lot of AP stories, but we’re oriented around KU students...our reporters know they have to include student quotes in their stories.” In fact, all pieces are written by *Kansan* staff writers. The KU student point of view represented in feature stories and the prominence of features like the “Free for All” column, which publishes students’ short comments anonymously, makes the paper a forum for student opinions. The paper has made it easy to solicit student opinion. Students call in and have 20 seconds to leave their question, comment, concern on a voice mail then it is reprinted in the Free for All column. The column sparks lots of discussion and dialogue among students and faculty, and enhances communication between students and the paper staff. An admissions staff member described the *Daily Kansan* as “the heartbeat of the campus.” Although most KU students obtain information about campus life from the newspaper, many campus events and meetings are announced via “chalkings.” Students chalk announcements and messages on sidewalks all over campus. The combined popularity of newspaper reading and chalking enhances campus communication.

College athletics are also a strong tradition at KU. The University takes its basketball very seriously. After a particularly riotous celebration following the 1988 national championship win by the basketball team, KU created a “celebrations committee.” The committee is charged with establishing celebration events and shifting the tone of celebrations from disorderly to respectable. One particularly effective way KU encouraged responsible fan behavior was the promotion of “Roy’s Rules.” The athletics department created a poster and ads in the student newspaper. The design featured the now former basketball coach Roy Williams and “Roy’s Rules,” which spelled out the responsible conduct Williams expected from the fans. According to administrators at KU, these efforts to provide appropriate forums for celebration and set the tone for student conduct, made an immediate difference on campus.

³ The Newspaper Readership Program was conceived in 1996 by President Spanier at Pennsylvania State University to provide students with broader perspectives on world and national views, and the opportunity to be more engaged citizens in their local community. The program is currently sponsored by *USA TODAY* and allows students to choose from a selection of newspapers including the New York Times, USA Today, Kansas City Star, and the Lawrence Journal World.

The Mount Oread landscape influenced the famous “Rock Chalk” chant adopted in 1886. Rock chalk is a transposition of chalk rock, the local name for the limestone outcropping found on Mount Oread. Teddy Roosevelt declared “Rock Chalk” to be one of best college chants. The term “Rock Chalk” permeates the KU landscape both literally and figuratively. For example, the “Rock Chalk Revue” is an elaborate campus variety show that is student-run, student-written, student-acted, and primarily coordinated by Greek-affiliated students. Involving hundreds of students, this fun event is a source of competition and pride among fraternity and sorority members. One student pointed out that the event has a service component, indicating that last year the event raised \$50,000 for United Way. An administrator who worked with students on this event claimed that “for some students, this is the highlight of their academic career.” This annual event and other traditions serve as powerful connective tissue that bonds students to the institution.

In the next section of this report, we detail aspects of the undergraduate program reflective of effective educational practice. The five NSSE benchmarks serve as a framework for organizing our findings.

NSSE BENCHMARKS OF EFFECTIVE EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE

Level of Academic Challenge

Challenging intellectual and creative work is central to student learning and quality undergraduate education. Colleges promote high levels of student achievement by emphasizing the importance of academic effort and setting high expectations for student performance.

The difference between KU’s *predicted* scores in this benchmark compared with its actual scores was impressive, indicating that the level of academic challenge reported by first-year and senior students exceeded 84% of all institutions that participated in the NSSE. The University of Kansas aims to be an *academically challenging, yet not overwhelming* learning environment for its students. Overall, KU’s scores were more comparable to the doctoral-extensive institutions and the entire NSSE participation group. The only area where KU does not perform at a level comparable to or better than other large public research universities is the number of papers written by both first-year students and seniors. Responses from KU first-year and senior students who participated in the survey indicate that the level of academic challenge is about the same as other institutions. The following text will reveal, however, the students and the administration consider this institution one that espouses and enacts the ideal of academic challenge.

KU’s efforts to maintain and improve high standards of academic challenge are reflected in its emphasis on undergraduate teaching and research, quality instruction, and its aim to raise the bar (with additional challenges) for exceptional students and to correspondingly raise struggling students to meet the bar (rather than lowering it). In addition, the institution strives to ensure that resources are available for all students to

meet the challenges. Setting high expectations, especially during admissions, orientation, and advising, appeared to enhance academic challenge. Orientation especially sets the tone for academic challenge and excellence.

A Rigorous General Education Component

As one faculty member pointed out, the “strong liberal arts college within the University” contributes to a solid, challenging general education curriculum. Some of the required introductory classes, like English 101 and Western Civilization, establish the level of academic expectations at KU; a few students perceived these as “weed out” courses, adding many students underestimate the rigor they present. One first-year student captured this nicely: “Classes are more challenging than I thought. I was a good student in high school, but I’ve had hard classes in pre-calculus and anthropology.” Seniors report on the Senior Survey that KU lives up to its reputation as an academically competitive institution.

And students who are looking for even more challenge can find it. As a German/Slavic Studies double major put it, “You can make it [KU] challenging by taking tougher classes.” A librarian told us that many classes use a substantial amount of original source material, which adds to the academic rigor of coursework.

At the same time, as with most other large universities, a non-trivial number of students “seek the path of least resistance” as one faculty member put it. But this number is shrinking according to one senior student who observed that students are increasingly “having trouble finding faculty members and courses that are ‘easy’.”

Emphasis on Undergraduate Research

The interplay between “the creation of knowledge and the dissemination of knowledge” is at the heart of a research university, several senior administrators emphasized. Rather than treating these as separate missions, many people and departments at KU are bringing them together in the undergraduate experience by involving students directly in original research. The University has funded undergraduate research since 1957 and was a pioneer in obtaining National Science Foundation (NSF) funding for undergraduate research. The NSF directly funded undergraduate research assistantships for two decades, from 1959 through the 1970s. Today, University funds are available to support undergraduate research—more than 60 Undergraduate Research Awards are available each year; other undergraduate researchers participate in externally funded projects.

The encouragement to get involved in a research project is not focused exclusively on upper-division students. Many first-year courses (English and Communication Studies, for example) have a research component designed to meet the first of the general education goals (see Table 1 for the goals). Librarians are involved in these sections, teaching students about research approaches and providing individual assistance. All sections of PRE 101 (an orientation academic adjustment course) include

library visits and research instruction. It is not unusual for GTAs in English to bring their classes to the library for instruction in research techniques.

Table 1. Goals of General Education

- Goal 1.** Enhance the skills and knowledge needed to research, organize, evaluate, and apply new information and develop a spirit of critical inquiry and intellectual integrity.
- Goal 2.** Acquire knowledge in the fine arts, the humanities, and the social, natural, and mathematical sciences and be able to integrate that knowledge across disciplines.
- Goal 3.** Improve the core skills of reading, writing, and numeracy, and enhance communication by clear, effective use of language.
- Goal 4.** Understand and appreciate the development, culture, and diversity of the United States and of other societies and nations.
- Goal 5.** Become aware of contemporary issues in society, technology, and the natural world and appreciate their complexity of cause and consequences.
- Goal 6.** Practice an ethic of self-discipline, social responsibility, and citizenship on a local, national, and international level.

Since 1998, an “Undergraduate Research Symposium” has been held each spring semester in late February or March. A full Saturday is devoted to students’ presentations of original research or other creative scholarship. The spring 2002 symposium, for example, included 28 oral presentations, 26 poster presentations, two films, and a cello concerto. The prior year’s event included 28 oral presentations and 34 poster presentations. Students presenting work come from just about every academic unit and a wide variety of majors. In addition, undergraduates who have presented projects in the past are involved in the organization of the symposium. *Luminary* is a student-run journal founded in 1997 that publishes students’ research papers, book reviews, and interviews, as well as abstracts of all the projects presented at the Undergraduate Research Symposium.

Initiative 2001, the University’s comprehensive strategic plan, proposed that every student do at least one of the following before graduation: conduct research with a faculty member, have an international experience, or be involved in service learning. Such experiences are to be acknowledged with a notation on the student’s transcript. The Provost is particularly keen on encouraging undergraduate research as a way to stimulate more faculty members to think in creative ways about how to involve undergraduates in inquiry.

Raising the Bar for Exceptional Students

A number of programs and opportunities are designed to push and challenge especially talented KU students. These include a university-wide Honors Program, Mount Oread Scholars program for high ability first-year students, departmental honors (usually including senior theses), and “honors housing” options.

The Honors Program at KU was founded in 1956, and “honors-in-...” courses date back to the late 1920s, making this one of the first Honors Programs in the nation. Originally associated with the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the Honors Program is now available to students from CLAS and all the schools, and enrolls about 1,600 students (accepting 300-400 new students each year). Special advising and housing are available for Honors Program students as is special coursework including a Freshman Tutorial and Honors sections of a number of courses (from introductory courses to advanced courses in most departments). These sections are restricted to students in the Honors Program or students pursuing departmental honors within the course’s field and enroll 20 or fewer students. The program also encourages students to pursue guided independent studies. One student said of his honors course, “It’s the most I’ve ever learned in one semester.”

Honors Program students also have access to Nunemaker Center, a small freestanding building that houses the Honors Program. Nunemaker includes space for a few small classrooms, administrative offices, traveling art exhibits, and several study and lounge spaces where students can gather to work or relax. Other activities outside the classroom, such as volunteering and internships, are available through the program. The Honors Program also administers the Undergraduate Research Awards. Courses, advising, and other interactions in the Honors Program thus provide a climate of high challenge and close interaction with faculty and peers.

To accommodate exceptional students who do not qualify for the Honors Program but are high ability students, KU also offers the Mount Oread Scholars program, an intensive advising program for talented non-honors first-year students. Each Oread Scholar is assigned a faculty or professional advisor in her or his intended major. More personalized advising is intended to help these students find appropriately challenging courses at KU. This program is coordinated through the Freshman-Sophomore Advising Center (FSAC). Most departments also offer honors for their majors, typically including senior theses.

KU also arranges a number of “honors housing” options for talented students. Two residence halls, McCollum and Templin, offer “honors floors,” in which especially talented students can challenge each other and encourage each other’s learning. Another option is the “scholarship halls,” cooperatively run residences of about 50 students each, for gifted students.

One student observed, “Professors are adept at finding us [motivated, ambitious students who are interested in academics].” Another student said, “Some professors

really go out of their way to reach out and take you under their wing, whether it's within a certain school or just in general. Some teachers just have that knack for seeking out people and realizing that they have certain potential, whatever that potential is and in whatever way they can help you, whether it's telling you to go to the Honors Program or taking you overseas or telling you to switch to a different class. I've run into a bunch of professors who have done that with me."

A Culture of Evidence

KU annually conducts an extensive assessment of general education, in which seniors participate in interviews with faculty as well as more quantitative surveys. Each year three-person teams (one faculty member from the student's area and two faculty members from outside the major area) conduct interviews with 120 fourth-year students. More than a third of the faculty has participated in the interview experience. The purpose of this exit interview is to contribute to the "culture of evidence" that exists at KU. Results of this assessment, including specific discipline results, are available to CLAS and the schools. However, a positive unintended outcome is the significant percentage of KU faculty members who have been engaged in this assessment activity that offers insight into students' undergraduate experience. And, we were told by several faculty and staff, departments have made changes based on student reports of their KU experience.

Promising Practices:

- A large proportion of classes with 30 or fewer students.
- Significant numbers of senior faculty in entry level classes and a decrease from 43% to 24% of student credit hours being taught by GTAs.
- Investment in GTA training, including a mentor program and other training and support networks.
- Raising the bar for academic challenge.
- Undergraduate Research Awards, over 60 of which are awarded each year, and the Undergraduate Research Symposium.
- Honors programs designed to match honors and high ability students with faculty in their major.
- Scholarship halls and honors floors in residence halls to help create a student environment that fosters academic challenge.

Active and Collaborative Learning

Students learn more when they are intensely involved in their education and have opportunities to think about and apply what they are learning in different settings. In addition, when students collaborate with others in solving problems or mastering difficult material they acquire valuable skills that prepare them to deal with the messy, unscripted problems they will encounter daily during and after college.

KU's scores on the active and collaborative learning benchmark are relatively strong. Scores for first-year students are on par with other AAU schools and above other Doctoral/Research Extensive institutions, while seniors' scores are significantly higher than their counterparts at these institutions. Individual item scores reflect a few of the high points in students' academic experience including frequently asking questions in class, working with other students on projects outside-of-class, and tutoring or teaching other students. About 63% of the first-year students say they "often" or "very often" asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions. Also, first-year students worked with their classmates on projects during class significantly more often than their peers at other universities. First-year students and seniors were more involved in tutoring or teaching other students than their counterparts at other large research institutions. More importantly, after statistically adjusting for the types of students that attend KU, and other institutional characteristics, it is clear that both first-year students and seniors are more engaged in active and collaborative learning than might be expected. In fact, on this measure, KU's scores are higher than predicted. Finally, NSSE data show approximately 61% of KU's first-year students responded that lower-division class sizes are "OK in size" and 70% indicated that the quality of instruction is "good" or "excellent." This particular statistic is relevant, considering KU's size; and, the institution prides itself in keeping the majority of its classes small in size.

Making the Academic Environment "Human Scale"

As with many other large public universities, KU has some large classes – some have 900 students – and a classroom that can accommodate more than 1,000 students. Classes of this size present a host of challenges to the inclusion of active and collaborative learning activities. For example, class size may limit students' participation and constrain the amount of group work during class. However, many colleges and universities have implemented reforms in undergraduate education by increasing the use of active and collaborative learning activities to improve the large class learning experience. Happily, this transformation is moving along well at KU.

A senior in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences discussed the contrast between the large, impersonal classes she had as a first-year student with the small classes and notable student-faculty interaction she had the last two years, especially in her major courses. Although she is very satisfied with the courses she took in her major and the quality of interaction she currently has with her faculty, she was concerned initially about going to a large school where she feared she might have a "terrible" educational experience. Like many of the students we spoke with, she entered KU convinced that large classes would be "a poor fit for my learning style." She admitted that she expected large classes to lack academic challenge and to be primarily taught in a "boring" lecture format. What she experienced at KU contradicted some of her expectations. "I had a geography course that I thought was going to be boring, but I ended up never missing this class because the GTA was so enthusiastic. He lectured with PowerPoint but always left room for questions and would prompt us...and would relate geography to real life issues. After 9/11 he related it to geography."

Another student described her large science course with similar enthusiasm. A senior, who came from a small high school and was afraid that she would “get lost at KU,” said, “I was scared of large lectures, but I ended up liking them. The lectures were always really well prepared, with lots of good visuals. They worked hard to make it interesting, and it was.” These students and others with whom we met noted the innovative teaching methods used to make large classes engaging, such as PowerPoint, Blackboard software, and other technology including slides and videos, and “interactive lecturing,” which incorporated various opportunities for students to participate. According to students, interactive lecturing occurs in large classes in which faculty enhance their lectures with techniques like infusing their lecture with questions, demonstrations, and using technology including video cameras to focus in on students. Most of the KU students we spoke with indicated that they had taken a few large, introductory courses and were surprisingly pleased with their experience. The technology helped make large classes more satisfying.

We observed two large lecture classes, a session of Biology 100, with an enrollment over 900, and a session of Business 240, with an enrollment of approximately 410, and were impressed by the high level of student participation. For example, in the Business 240 class, students were immediately organized into small groups and got to work on an exercise that required them to collect data from various locations on campus (i.e., verify the number of light poles on the KU football field and calculate the light costs per year) and create an income statement. As they organized themselves in their teams to collect at least 10 pieces of data across campus, students were talking about how to calculate depreciation and post revenue generated. Students reported that these sorts of activities were regularly scheduled in the course. A student described the course as being “fun” and “highly organized.” She explained that the instructor used a structured PowerPoint presentation for most lectures, required attendance and held students accountable by scheduling a quiz almost every week. Students indicated that because something was due each week and they were never sure when quizzes would be conducted (the instructor varied the administration of quizzes, sometimes he gave them at the beginning of class, other times in the middle), they always felt the pressure to be prepared for class. The instructor also frequently showed short videos and other interactive displays and moved the video camera around the classroom to make the class feel small. One of the graduate teaching assistants emphasized that the video camera and computer technology were vital components of the course. The GTA concluded, “You can’t set up with an overhead in a class this big, and expect it to be effective.”

Several students believed that good teaching kept them coming to classes they might have skipped. Another senior agreed with the comment by the student in the Geography class, “I expected to be able to blow-off large lecture classes, but I don’t because the classes are actually interesting and I don’t mind going!” A first-year student made a similar comment about the two large lecture courses she had fall semester. “I could not go to class and no one would notice...the notes are available on line...I wouldn’t miss anything, but my teacher is good so I go.”

Students' comments contradicted the views of other students that attendance is optional in large classes. However, these KU students reported that they never missed class because their instructors were engaging and provided opportunities for discussion. As a junior stated, "it is easy not to make the effort to go to or do your best work in large classes." However, these students believed that in most of their large classes they could learn something by attending.

Although there were large classes that pleasantly surprised students, most students preferred their smaller classes, particularly in the major. According to a senior, "it's the small discussion classes where the best learning happens." Honors classes were the most frequently mentioned small classes where active and collaborative learning activities were widely applied. Students reported that Honors courses demanded more from them in terms of in-class participation. "I might write more papers in my other small classes, but in Honors courses it's all about discussion."

Some students mentioned that they enjoyed the semesters where they had a mix of small and large classes. However, other students described that they strategically placed small class size as their first selection criteria as they chose classes to fulfill their general education requirements. A junior explained that she selected classes this way so she could have greater opportunities to contribute to class discussions and for more contact with her instructors.

Several faculty members told us how they incorporate active and collaborative learning activities. A faculty member in the English department exclaimed, "Active and collaborative learning is a damn near mantra in English...Although in English it is a political and social commitment, in Engineering it's clear that it's part of the curriculum." Another student described a faculty member who teaches a fairly large course on ethics who "turns everything we read about into a real life example." The faculty member incorporates creative approaches to engage students in the material including taking a pie in the face to get students to think about the credibility of eyewitness testimony!

Group Projects and Applied Learning

According to students, certain schools and majors emphasize greater integration of group projects and presentations that result in hands-on, authentic learning, such as in the schools of Business, Journalism, Engineering and Architecture. For example, group and individual applied learning in the School of Architecture and Urban Design is well known. The campus tour guide called Marvin Hall "the KU lighthouse" because the lights in the architecture studio space are always on as architecture majors work round-the-clock to complete their design projects. The studio approach of architecture and hands-on teaching approaches of professional schools routinely involved more group presentations and projects. A junior in the School of Business indicated that she "had to do lots of group projects. Every semester I had at least two classes that had significant group projects."

A student reported that her math instructor regularly gave group quizzes where students were able to collaborate on the quiz problems. A math professor explained the importance of getting to know students enough to teach in ways they can understand, emphasizing that students needed to get to know one another, and “to engage in group work,” and that it was the instructors’ responsibility to “bring them together.” He added, “Collaborative effort brings success.”

The physical environment also encourages collaboration. For example, students indicated that they used the large table space in the Anschutz Library and the Kansas Union for group study and to work on group assignments. The spacious areas with natural lighting in Anschutz are particularly conducive for such work. Space in the residence halls (former dining areas and public study space) also seemed designed to encourage group interaction. Observations of students in the library and Union space confirm that they are being used for this purpose.

Students Learning From and Teaching Other Students

Tutoring and academic assistance is available to students in a variety of settings. Some schools and the University offer academic support services. For example, Women’s Engineering Programs, a student organization in the School of Engineering, offers peer tutoring and mentoring. In addition, the Freshman-Sophomore Advising Center (FSAC), the Student Development Center, and the Writing Center also provide tutoring and support to different groups of students.

A number of students talked positively about the advising and academic support they received through the FSAC. A junior mentioned that he continued to meet with his advisor in the FSAC to consult about his course selection and academic performance. He recently talked with his FSAC advisor about his decision to remain in a course and get tutoring instead of withdrawing. The student took advantage of peer tutoring available via the Student Development Center.

The KU Writing Center extensively uses undergraduates as tutors – about 60% of the tutors are undergrads – following the “peer-to-peer model.” A credit-bearing class, “Tutoring & Teaching Writing,” has extended the impact and legitimacy of peer tutoring.

Promising Practices:

- Institutional emphasis on improving teaching has encouraged the use of more active and collaborative learning activities.
- Institutional commitment to making large lecture classes more engaging has increased the integration of active learning activities in class.
- KU students experience high levels of support from approachable faculty and GTAs who encourage them to ask questions and contribute to class discussions.
- Studio approach of architecture and hands-on teaching approaches of professional schools supports active and collaborative learning.
- Peer tutoring and mentoring enables opportunities for students to learn from peers.

Student Interaction with Faculty Members

Students see first-hand how experts think and solve practical problems interacting with faculty members inside and outside the classroom. As a result, their teachers become role models, mentors and guides to continuous life-long learning.

NSSE data show that KU first-year students' responses were about on par with other AAU schools, while seniors' responses were above the 60th percentile when compared against doctoral-research institutions that participated in the survey. The NSSE data were particularly impressive for seniors, as the benchmark scores were much higher than predicted and much higher compared with other AAU schools. A closer look at the data shows that faculty members are very responsive to the needs of their students. A significant number of students (both first-year and senior students) indicated that they discussed their grades/assignments with their instructors. Almost 60% of the first-year students and almost 70% of the senior students responded that they discuss their class readings with faculty members outside of class. When asked whether they discussed career plans with a faculty member or advisor, 77% of first-year students and 87% of senior students answered "sometimes," "often" and "very often." At least 81% of KU's first-year students and 97% of its senior students indicated that they "very often," "often" and "sometimes" receive prompt feedback from their professors. Only 3% say they never get prompt feedback, a much lower proportion than other universities.

Student-Faculty Interaction is an Institutional Priority

KU clearly values student-faculty interaction. One faculty member confirmed what we observed firsthand: "We leave our doors open." This gesture is one way that faculty communicate that they are accessible and willing to help students succeed. Students told us that faculty members often personalize questions. People are available to each other and willing to interact to solve problems. The student newspaper editor said he knew he could call the Provost at home to check on a fact for a story.

The faculty members with whom we spoke suggested the institutional value placed on high quality teaching creates a culture in which the interaction between students and faculty is frequent and very positive. One student leader said, "It can best be described as they are looking to replace themselves, you know they are seeking individuals who can become the next professor in their area of study." The Provost's Office supports student and faculty interaction through providing undergraduate research grants and funding for the Undergraduate Research Symposium (see the "Emphasis on Undergraduate Research" section). This approach has led to the development of opportunities for undergraduates to participate in research projects with faculty and supervised internships in the community.

Genuine Interest in Students and Their Success

Many faculty members impressed us with the genuine care and concern they had for students. We heard this plainly from professors reflecting upon their own and their colleagues' practices; moreover, students underscored it repeatedly.

One faculty member tells her classes, "It will take me a little while to learn your names but I will remember them for the rest of my life." This ethic of individualized attention goes beyond just remembering the person's name. It extends to knowing the person and caring about her/him as an individual. We heard numerous stories about faculty members who reached out to students to assist them personally or academically. One student reported that her professor made arrangements to arrive early so she could check out a piece of equipment she needed. Another discussed being "adopted" by a faculty member who invited students to her home to study a foreign language. Another student talked favorably about instructors who took the time to get to know students in the class. A junior reported that she found her faculty approachable and available, "I turned a C into an A by meeting with my professor and TA." Instructors who learned students' names, made themselves accessible to students before and after class and during office hours, and who used e-mail to stay in touch with students were highly praised. A Journalism major described how one of her instructors in a large introductory course offered her career advice. "He took me aside after class and suggested that I might be really good as a correspondent." There is a sense among the students that they "matter" at KU and that many faculty members consider students to be colleagues and valuable community members.

The practice of individual attention and care was illustrated through an example of a faculty member who collected student information on class data cards. In addition to the standard name, major and e-mail address, students were asked to write down what they are involved with on and off campus. The faculty member followed up on this information, initiating discussions about clubs and organizations. Another student reported that a faculty member encouraged her to join a particular club as it might help her with her post graduate plans. The information gave the faculty member a sense of the student's life.

Not all KU faculty members are engaged at high levels with students; nonetheless, a substantial number set the tone and define students' expectations. As one dean noted, there are a "number of faculty who are so actively engaged that they lead the culture." This kind of care and concern allows faculty to invest in students' academic success. This willingness to accommodate students often emanates from a willingness to think of education more broadly than traditional in-classroom-only ways, and impacts introductory and large classes as well as advanced and smaller ones.

Connecting with Students through Effective Pedagogy

Students talked about instructors who made themselves accessible by sharing information about themselves and their families. Good teaching methods and interesting course material kept students coming to large classes. However, students reported even greater satisfaction when their instructors made the class more personal. A faculty member explained KU faculty members “spontaneous” practice of making “personal connections” with students as components of the important practice of “acknowledging students’ lives.”

As one professor put it, “You do what you need to do in the classroom to reach each one [of your students].” Another instructor remarked about teaching introductory math courses “You can disappoint them...or you can teach so both groups [those who find math easy and those for whom it is difficult] feel great.” Another professor, teaching a large introductory course (in which it is impossible to meet all the students, or to have virtually any personal interaction during class), insists on offering weekly study-and-review sessions for small groups himself, rather than using GTAs. A Journalism student was surprised when the faculty member teaching her large science class contacted her, acknowledged her good performance on exams, and asked her to consider a major in science. She appreciated the acknowledgement and credited this experience with changing her opinion that she could be anonymous in large classes.

Several faculty members pointed to the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) as a key component in providing them with insight into how to better connect with students inside and outside-of-class. Another program that both students and faculty mentioned as promoting interaction is the Undergraduate Teaching Assistant (UTAs). One student reported that it was the single most important experience he had as an undergraduate because it gave him and his fellow UTAs an opportunity to interact with a faculty member and learn what it was like to “plan and grade a class.”

A new faculty member in English explained that “directed studies” (independent study) provided students and faculty more opportunities for quality student-faculty interaction. She was pleased with the number of courses that could be pursued by students via independent study.

Teaching the Next Generation the “KU Way”

Mechanisms are in place to pass on this ethic of care and concern to each new generation of faculty. For example, because all decision-making committees have 20% student representation, including search and screen committees, new faculty recruits interact with students from the start. In addition, all new faculty members are assigned a senior faculty member mentor to facilitate their socialization to campus culture. In addition, a key component of the mentoring program for new faculty is to learn how to personalize teaching.

Promising Practices:

- Genuine faculty interest in students' academic, personal and social well-being and a concerted effort to integrate students' co-curricular interests with academic discussions.
- Well-regarded Center for Teaching Excellence that sponsors programs to improve teaching and learning.
- Numerous teaching awards serve as incentives to increase the quality of teaching.
- New Faculty Orientation as a means to socialize faculty, build connections and establish norms of teaching excellence.
- Teaching Summit for faculty at the beginning of the academic year.
- Emphasis on innovative approaches to increasing opportunities for student-faculty interaction (e.g., smaller study groups, individual acknowledgment of academic success).
- UTA program, which provide undergraduates the opportunity to learn how to plan and grade a class.

Enriching Educational Experiences

Educationally effective colleges and universities offer many different opportunities inside and outside the classroom that complement the goals of the academic program. One of the most important is exposure to diversity, from which students learn valuable things about themselves and gain an appreciation for other cultures. Technology is used increasingly to facilitate the learning process and – when done appropriately – can increase collaboration between peers and instructors, which actively engages students in their learning. Other valuable educational experiences include internships, community service, and senior capstone courses that provide students with opportunities to synthesize, integrate, and apply their knowledge. As a result, learning is deeper, more meaningful, and ultimately more useful because what students know becomes a part of who they are.

KU scores on the enriching educational experiences benchmark are strong, with both the first-year and senior student scores placing the institution in the 60th percentile. After controlling for student and institutional characteristics, KU's first-year and senior students' scores exceeded more than 84% of the institutions participating in NSSE. The data indicate that when compared against other doctoral-extensive institutions and the NSSE national group, KU students are taking advantage of opportunities to make their undergraduate experience more meaningful. When asked about practicum, internship and like experiences, the number of KU students (first-year and senior students) answering "yes" was comparable to the aforementioned groups. Likewise, affirmative responses from KU students participating in community service or volunteer work, foreign language course work, and study abroad were similar to their comparison groups. Considering its homogeneity, these scores indicate that students are making an effort to reach beyond their own circles to become engaged with others.

An Institutional Philosophy that Promotes Involvement

Many faculty members seemed philosophically committed to the premise that learning occurs not only in the classroom but also through out-of-class co-curricular activities. It is not uncommon for faculty to ask students at the start of class about the activities in which they are engaged. Some faculty members even encourage representatives from various clubs and organizations to visit their classes to talk about the educational value of involvement.

Students told us about faculty members and advisors who encouraged them to become involved in clubs and organizations. A senior student commented, "I've never been reluctant to inform a faculty member that I must miss class due to a trip or off-campus activities sponsored by one of my organizations and faculty members are always extremely accommodating." Faculty and others, particularly those working in various academic support services, are constantly on the outlook for "non-connected" students to find ways to get them involved and integrated with the KU community.

Broad-Based Intentional Efforts to Involve Students

KU provides an abundance of activities and opportunities for student involvement in a variety of educationally purposeful activities that, taken together, illustrate a "collective responsibility" on the part of various campus agents and agencies for encouraging student involvement in a variety of educationally enriching experiences. The Center for Campus Life is a primary "entry point" for students to become involved in the more than 400 campus clubs and organizations – academic clubs, governmental and political organizations, religious groups, 45 sororities and fraternities, social and service groups, academic honorary organizations, and special interests groups. The Center sponsors a publication entitled "Leader Bits" that highlights the benefits of campus involvement along with a three-step process and tips for successful involvement. Faculty as well as student affairs staff, routinely use this office as a primary resource for helping students become connected.

There are a number of other formal institutional structures that facilitate meaningful involvement in a range of educationally purposeful activities. The Freshman Summer Institute (FSI) provides some new students with an advantage because they spend four weeks on campus in June or July, take two classes for five hours of college credit and learn about ways to become involved with the rich resources of the institution. Peer advisors from the Freshman Sophomore Advising Center (FSAC) are employed to work with faculty and staff during student advising appointments. "We're there to create a more comfortable setting for students....they're more inclined to tell their story to a peer than to the faculty advisor....we do a lot of reassuring," explained a peer advisor. The FSI is considered to be most effective for out of state students. An undergraduate who participated in FSI described that she has remained friends with the students she met during FSI. "We even have reunions," she added. Hawk Week, the annual welcome and orientation program, encourages multiple "connections" by teaching new students about the institution's traditions, enhancing their awareness about various clubs and

organizations, and emphasizing the role of co-curricular involvement in their overall educational development.

Many new students choose to participate in one of the sections of PRE 101 Orientation Seminars (20 sections are scheduled in the fall semester, six in the spring and eight in the summer) that provide an introduction to the University community, strategies for successful transition, and information about University resources and procedures. The primary objective of the course is to ensure that every student succeeds academically and becomes connected to a club, organization or other group during the first semester. As one African American undergraduate stated, “PRE 101 was really instrumental in my success. Once I became involved in various clubs and organizations, the campus became much smaller and, as a result, I felt much more comfortable and confident that I could succeed at KU.”

The relatively new Freshman-Sophomore Advising Center (FSAC) is also a primary venue for helping students get connected. FSAC provides each new student with a “Graduate in Four” advising notebook that offers a guide and “road map” for making the most of their undergraduate years. In the welcome letter at the front of the notebook, students are encouraged to “plan out-of-classroom activities such as organizations and internships that develop your skills and experiences, broaden you as a person, and enhance your opportunities for employment or graduate or professional school.” The notebook then includes a section for each of the four undergraduate years along with a “checklist” that students can use to ensure that they are making appropriate choices. The intent is for students to bring the notebook to every advising session and the advisor utilizes this to review students’ progress in connecting various learning opportunities.

Another section of the notebook entitled “Your Career and Academic Pathway” encourages first-year students to focus on self-exploration through involvement in clubs and organizations; sophomore students to become involved in volunteer activities; juniors to secure an internship or volunteer experience; and, seniors to focus on job search strategies. During a visit to one of the PRE101 classes, team members observed the seminar leader utilizing this document to emphasize the importance of internships, community service involvement, and study abroad opportunities to a group of 15 first-year students. The seminar leader used a PowerPoint presentation to illustrate the range of educational skills students could develop through involvement in these kinds of educationally enriching experiences.

Student government at KU dates back to the early 1900s and is steeped in rich traditions built on a strong history of representing student interests and involving students in institutional governance. With a budget of over 14 million dollars, the Senate achieves its objectives through five standing committees: finance, graduate affairs, multicultural affairs, student rights, and university affairs. In addition to the 80 elected Senators, hundreds of other KU students participate in student government through the five standing committees.

Over the years the Student Senate has been responsible for initiating a number of major programs including the Center for Community Outreach (CCO) and the Multicultural Resource Center – both of which would not be in existence had it not been for student initiative and a “take charge” attitude. During various student interviews, students commented on the encouragement they received from administrators and faculty to “take initiative” and be responsible for various aspects of their undergraduate experience. This, in turn, results in a great deal of “student empowerment” that leads to higher levels of involvement in a range of institutional activities.

Diversity and Multiculturalism

In recent years KU has strengthened its commitment to enhancing diversity and multiculturalism, earmarking resources for examining the campus climate for diversity and establishing a “Commission on the Status of Minorities” to study the recruitment and retention strategies employed by departments and schools. The institution recently allocated additional funds for two admissions recruiters and multicultural recruitment teams whose efforts are dedicated exclusively to minority recruitment, and created special “Super Saturdays” whereby students of color from cities such as Wichita, and Kansas City are transported to KU to learn more about the institution. As one School of Education faculty member stated, “The institution is getting much smarter about attracting and retaining students of color.” Another faculty member commented, “Although we are still in the early stages of our diversity initiative, we are making a difference, one person at a time.” According to the Office of Institutional Research and Planning, retention of American Indian, African American, and Hispanic first-time freshmen after one year has increased from 66% for the Fall 1998 class to 79% for the Fall 2002 class. Additionally, enrollment of American Indian, African American, and Hispanic first-time freshman increased from 235 to 304 from Fall 1998 to Fall 2002, an increase of almost 30%.

When asked whether they had serious discussions with students who held different religious beliefs, political views, or personal values KU students’ (both first-year and senior students) responded “often” or “very often” at a higher level than other students in the NSSE sample and at peer institutions.

KU sponsors approximately 30 cultural student organizations including the National Pan-Hellenic Council; Hispanic American Leadership Organization; First Nations Student Association; Black Student Union and Asian American Student Union. A faculty member noted that “there’s a lot here for Jewish students, including very Jewish identified faculty and a good Hillel director with good programming.” The Office of Multicultural Affairs provides a range of academic, personal and cultural enrichment to encourage a sense of community for all KU students. Located on the first floor of the main administration building, it is in close proximity to a variety of student support and academic services. The office places a major emphasis on academic and student success rather than campus programming and diversity education.

Diversity issues are increasingly being infused through the curriculum. For example, Goal Four of the general education program states, “understand and appreciate the development, culture, and the diversity of the United States and of other Societies and Nations.” In addition, all majors in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences are required to take a course in non-western culture (for example, from Africa, the Pacific Islands, the Middle East). These classes provide significant discussions about diversity issues and are often the focal point of interaction with diverse students and ideas.

The Multicultural Resource Center (MRC), conceived in 1991 by the KU Student Senate, was established to promote an educational environment that recognizes and celebrates the diverse composition of the Lawrence Campus population. The MRC serves as a primary resource for developing cultural sensitivity through the curriculum and other academic programs and to assure that the social and classroom environment of the campus is inclusive with respect to the cultural, racial, ethnic, religious and other differences represented in the diverse University community. The Center addresses special needs and helps students succeed in college through a variety of strategies, programs and services. The Center also sponsors a “diversity peer education team” to facilitate meaningful dialogues about race in a multitude of settings. The Center recently coordinated a weekend retreat, “Colors of KU,” that is making a profound impact on many students. One female student from a rural area in Kansas commented that the weekend retreat was the “most important KU experience of her undergraduate years.”

The mission of the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) is to enhance the educational experience and opportunities of all students, but more specifically African American, Asian American, Hispanic and American Indian students. OMA sponsors HAWK Link, an important student support program that makes contact with first-year students as soon as they are admitted to the University. HAWK Link is an academic based retention program designed to assist first-year students from diverse backgrounds navigate through their first year by utilizing existing campus programs. Instead of recreating or developing new programs, HAWK Link operates as an “inclusive model” that connects students to campus through existing services and programs to increase students’ involvement in the campus as a whole. As a result, several offices work together to collaborate on HAWK Link. One of its component programs of HAWK Link, the Students Together Excelling in Education as Peers (stEp), provides faculty mentoring, free tutoring and an “early alert” system. The retention rate for students who participate in HAWK Link is a significant 89% compared to 78% for similar students who do not participate in the program. Noel-Levitz recently recognized HAWK Link as one of the three most effective retention programs in the nation.

Based upon interviews with faculty in CLAS and the different schools, it appears that faculty members are committed to KU’s diversity agenda. In the School of Journalism, for example, faculty members stress the value of diversity through conversations in every class. The school requires evidence of a diversity focus in every course syllabus and implemented an ambitious scholarship program that provides opportunities for students of color. The “Multicultural Scholars Program” started in the School of Business in 1992 to provide comprehensive mentoring and scholarship support

to students of color interested in earning a bachelor's degree in business. The program expanded in 2001 to KU's education and journalism schools and has subsequently expanded to other schools.

In the co-curricular arena, there was evidence that certain organizations were crossing traditional boundaries to interact on a frequent basis. For example, the president of a sorority mentioned a joint philanthropic project between her group and a black fraternity designed to "adopt a highway." She found this activity to be instrumental in breaking down traditional barriers between the predominantly white Greek chapters and the traditionally black Greek chapters. Interestingly, according to an institutional research staff member, the faculty rate students high on social awareness and diversity.

Technology

KU is substantially investing in computing and information technology to enhance the overall educational experience of students. The institution provides e-mail accounts and 10 megabytes of web space to all students. Although many students have personal computers, 25 computer labs are distributed broadly across campus resulting in one public computer per 20 undergraduate students. All University housing provides computer access to the campus network. More than 350 courses have an online component using Blackboard, a teaching software, or other online capacity. CLAS and the schools along with Academic Technology Services provide an innovative technological program – Academic Requirements Tracking System (ARTS) – enabling students to track their course requirements, complete degree audits, and model alternative programs of study.

The School of Education recently implemented broad-based video-conferencing with public schools in a variety of communities. Teacher education students on the KU campus can observe "master teachers" in action and then discuss various teaching techniques through small group discussions and seminars. This technology enables students in the required Educational Psychology 200 course to view different levels of cognitive growth by observing student development at different ages/stages in various classrooms.

Study Abroad

KU has a long-standing commitment to broadening students' perspectives through study abroad and other international experiences. Because of the "enormous self-segregation among students" as one faculty member told us, study abroad opportunities are becoming increasingly important. The Office of Study Abroad offers more than 75 programs where students earn KU credit for courses taken while studying in other countries. The institution offers both short and full term study abroad experiences. The London Review (a spring two week abroad experience) is a course offered to students as a shorter study abroad experience. Students plan and coordinate the whole trip during the course. They write reviews of their experience (plays, sites, museums, hotels, etc.) and submit them at the end of the course. As one senior who works in the Study Abroad

office commented, “these short trips abroad are becoming more popular for students who can’t do a whole semester.” According to one administrator, the University is trying to encourage more students to study abroad during the sophomore year so they can satisfy various general education course requirements without disrupting the course sequence once they get into their major.

A senior Business major from Kansas heard about the London Review from a presentation made in one of her classes. She commented, “I never thought I would study abroad because I am such a home body,” but nonetheless she chose to participate. As a result, she decided to spend an entire semester abroad. She indicated that the English professor who teaches the London Review course boasts that she has a “95% return rate” of students who take London Review and go on to participate in a second study abroad program. The School of Architecture and Urban Design sponsors summer studios in Europe in places such as Italy, France, Scotland, Germany, Denmark and Australia. Similarly, in the School of Journalism, students are three times more likely to have an international experience, particularly a semester abroad, and sponsors summer programs in Ghana, Costa Rica and Italy.

Those students with international study told us that their time abroad was the most powerful experience they had at KU. It gave them an opportunity to see the world, enhance their foreign language skills, and interact with a faculty member in a different setting or country.

Internships

A brochure distributed by the University Career and Employment Services office lists numerous internship opportunities ranging from Alaska State Parks to Washington Center internships. Most schools and CLAS also offer a variety of field experiences. Students in the School of Education, for example, combine field experiences with courses on instructional techniques, educational theories, and various academic subjects. Students enrolled in health, sports, and exercise sciences also benefit from extensive field experiences.

Our student tour guide spoke in glowing terms about her second semester internship at Disney World where she earned six college credits. A senior Journalism student stated that her internship in Denver with Campus Speak was one of the highlights of her undergraduate experience. Another Journalism student talked about the “invaluable experience” she gained working on the *Daily Kansan*, the University student newspaper where she managed a budget of over one million dollars.

The School of Architecture and Urban Design participated in a studio whose goal was to construct a plan and vision for the urban area in the core of Kansas City. They carried out a detailed economic and demographic analysis of the urban core and then prepared conceptual design proposals for an array of different developments that could emerge. Internships and field experiences provide students with practical work experience related to their academic fields of study and career objectives. In addition,

internships are a way of demonstrating to employers that students have acquired the skills and experiences necessary to be successful in the workplace.

Volunteerism and Service Learning

Volunteerism is becoming increasingly important and the 16 year-old, student-run Center for Community Outreach (CCO) serves over 8,000 volunteers annually (about 40% of KU undergraduate students) through volunteer referral and placement. The organization is a “historically active” student group that serves as an organizing umbrella for 16 other organizations as well as an incubator for new initiatives. It receives a separate two-year allocation from student government. The CCO has 12 programs designed to meet community needs through mentoring, gardening, food preparation and service. Relationships between students and individuals are fostered in the diverse Lawrence community through CCO programs. The CCO also sponsors the popular “Alternative Breaks” program that currently has three divisions: Alternative Spring Breaks, Alternative Summer Breaks, and Alternative Weekend Breaks. Last spring, for example, more than 140 students participated in services at more than 10 spring break sites where they learned first-hand about important social issues while doing volunteer work. The alternative spring break programs have become a national model that is emulated by other colleges and universities throughout the country.

Through the efforts of the CCO, approximately 80,000 community service hours are achieved each year. While the percentage of student involvement could not be ascertained, the highest level of service participation was attributed to the Greek organizations. CCO’s central and prominent office in the heart of the Clubs and Organization office complex indicates its central role in co-curricular life.

Senior Capstones

Programs of all the schools and some departments in CLAS offer a senior capstone experience, which can be an excellent opportunity for students to integrate what they have learned in their major and to connect theory and practice. In the history department, for example, students complete a two credit hour research-focused capstone. A history professor commented, “This is a very high cost, but high quality program that attracts a lot of attention from senior faculty members.”

In the School of Journalism, the “campaigns course” provides the senior capstone experience for all students. The three faculty members who teach different sections of the course must line up a client – a corporation such as Coca Cola, Hallmark, or Russell Stovers Candies. The company “client” asks students to develop a campaign that enables the company to address an important, “real world” issue. Students are then divided into six or seven person teams and assume responsibilities for various functions (e.g., research, creative initiative, media). During the last week of the semester, student teams make presentations to the client and receive extensive feedback concerning their campaigns. According to the Dean, this is a major “integrative experience” that ties student course work and co-curricular experiences from the first to the fourth year. This

capstone course is a clear example of a course that pushes students to go beyond their perceived limits, and to become professionals.

The School of Architecture and Urban Design has a similarly challenging capstone course. Seniors work together over the course of a semester to design and build a house. The Dean reported that the important lesson students learn from this project is not in the mechanics of design and construction (some of which they should already have learned) but in teamwork and problem solving.

Other Points of Connection

The Honors Council, a student-run organization, sponsors special programs such as dinner theater presentations. Usually 40 or more students attend a dinner where faculty members describe various aspects of the theater event before students actually attend. Special honors courses, as well as general courses, utilize KU's nationally acclaimed museums: the Natural History Museum and Bio-Diversity Research Center; Spencer Museum of Art, Spencer Research Library, and the Wilcox Classical Museum. The museums are often a destination point for a variety of enriching field experiences. The campus also sponsors a nationally acclaimed symphony, annual jazz festival, "day on the hill" concert, and the acclaimed festival of nations.

Under a partnership between student life and the communication studies department, KU offers students a leadership minor – a 19-credit hour program combining academic endeavors with experiential learning. The minor is designed to help students explore, enhance and apply their skills and knowledge of current leadership trends, theories and best practices to their overall undergraduate experience. In addition to formal course work in ethics, community development, leadership, diversity and culture, students participate in supervised community service, as well as practicum or field experience.

Residence Halls Support the Academic Mission

While admittedly late in embracing innovative residence hall configurations such as learning communities, many people from different groups (students, staff, faculty) spoke positively about the importance of the residence hall experience in creating a positive learning climate at KU. Long-standing programs (e.g., Scholarship Halls), the intense community built within the halls (e.g., "I loved living in the dorms," Junior Ambassador), and the strong friendships established among student residents led to a high level of satisfaction with the halls. Among the themes being promoted is the commitment of Lewis Hall residents to a participation agreement, where they engage in leadership, community service, and diversity experiences. An organized system of peer mentors also supports the effort to enhance the learning atmosphere in campus housing.

The residence halls were obviously the place where students were introduced to opportunities for involvement. The director of the Center for Campus Life attributed the close communication between the Center for Campus Life and the Department of Student

Housing as the reason for successful programs for both offices. Resident advisors also sponsor a variety of events and programs, which we were told helps to establish a strong sense of community in the residence halls (especially within the scholarship halls). Career services personnel are now partnering with residence life staff to promote more intentional reflection by students on how their academic and social choices related to career development. Finally, diversity education is receiving renewed emphasis.

Promising Practices:

- Broad-based intentional institutional efforts to get students involved in a variety of educationally enriching experiences throughout their undergraduate years.
- An atmosphere of “collegiality” that encourages students to demonstrate initiative and to “take responsibility for their own affairs and learning.”
- “Graduate in Four Notebooks” that serve to help students effectively plan their educational careers.
- Strengthened institutional commitment to enhancing diversity and multiculturalism.
- Connecting theory and practice through study abroad, internships, senior capstones, field experiences and service learning.
- Creative use of technology to facilitate academic and co-curricular connections among and between educationally purposeful activities.
- Residence halls that support the academic mission.

Supportive Campus Environment

Students perform better and are more satisfied at colleges that are committed to their success and cultivate positive working and social relations among different groups of students.

KU’s first-year students’ scores for this benchmark exceeded 70% of the AAU institutions participating in NSSE and approximately 60% of other doctoral-research institutions. According to NSSE results, KU students are especially satisfied with the quality of relations with faculty members, administrators, and other students. First-year students reported that they experienced high levels of support to thrive socially at KU. In fact, first-year students’ scores on this item in the benchmark were significantly higher than other AAU and NSSE schools.

Students freely offered positive statements about their experiences in the residence halls and with co-curricular activities. Students, faculty and staff alike described the campus climate as “embracing, warm and welcoming,” approachable, open, and collegial, and one that emphasized a strong “sense of connectedness to the institution.” Student affairs staff, administrators, and faculty know that students achieve academically when they are well-rounded and connected to the University. Therefore, every effort is made to communicate opportunities and identify connecting points to the campus. Staff members, particularly during orientation, work to find “connecting points to the University” for students.

Helping Students Meet High Expectations

Encountering a challenging professor or course at KU does not mean that a student is left to her or his own devices in meeting that challenge. Regardless of whether a student is struggling or exceptional, individual faculty members and the University community as a whole aim to ensure that all students have access to the resources they need to meet the academic challenges at KU. There is an almost palpable ethic on campus that because students have chosen KU, the University will not let them fail. As a result, the faculty are highly accessible and they communicate an attitude of high investment in student academic success. According to the Director of Study Abroad, “Someone will take a personal interest in a student.” Many faculty members reported that they look out for students who are falling behind or failing. “We want to err on the side of helping the student.” Thus, while known for its academic rigor, KU is at the same time committed to helping struggling students meet the University’s standards, rather than lowering those standards and expectations. KU encourages academically unprepared high school students to transfer to KU after strengthening their credentials elsewhere. As one senior administrator put it, “You don’t have to start at KU to finish at KU.”

An administrator noted that students from smaller high schools or with inadequate academic preparation sometimes “get beat up here.” The previously mentioned “Orientation Seminar” course, PRE 101, serves to address this issue. PRE 101 is taken during the first year and is designed to introduce students to the University community and University policies and give students the tools they need to meet the academic challenges KU presents. Also included are strategies for making the transition to college, guidance on planning coursework over four years, and career planning. PRE 101 courses intentionally have low enrollments; we observed a section with 15 students. We were told that PRE 101 seems to have the desired effect as the persistence rate for students who complete the course is significantly higher⁴.

There are also a number of academic support services available to enable students to meet their academic challenges. The KU Writing Center, which opened in 1998, has anywhere from three to five locations on campus offering assistance to a wide range of students and writing needs, ranging from “remedial” help to feedback to talented undergraduates and graduate students. During the 2001-2002 academic years, more than 3,000 students took advantage of writing support services at the center, one of the highest repeat rates in the Big 12. Tutors explained that the convenient location of the centers and the welcome reception that students get when they come into the center contribute to this heavy use. Two of the centers are located in high student traffic areas – Wescoe Hall and the Library – which results in a lot of “impulse and drop-in” tutoring. According to the Director, “This suits the KU student.” The student writing tutors emphasized the importance of having satellite offices, Writers Roost, in high traffic areas. Students and

⁴ The four-year graduation rate of participants is statistically higher for students who took the course. Students who enroll in the course are more likely to return for subsequent semesters than those who do not enroll. Source: Office of Institutional Research and Planning, University of Kansas.

tutors described the centers as “relaxed environments.” In addition to offering face-to-face assistance, the center also offers online writing consultation.

The director of the KU Writing Center emphasized that the center has benefited from the support of the faculty and administration. She has permission from the Provost to send an e-mail to all faculty of a prewritten promotion of writing center services that faculty members can easily insert in their syllabus. In addition, the tutors and the director described the relationship between faculty and the KU Writing Center as positive. “We’ve found that students feel comfortable disclosing to their professors that they’ve come to the Writing Center....and faculty have been supportive of these students.”

Connection and Attachment

A variety of people – from the Provost to faculty and staff members to students – mentioned a “sense of connectedness” among faculty, students, and staff. People attributed the pervasive connectedness to a strong sense of community in the residence halls (especially within the scholarship halls), Greek life, campus ministers’ outreach leading to high religious activity participation, and rich academic cultures within the schools. In addition, the highly collaborative climate fostered by senior administrators, the rich sense of place, and high morale leads to a situation such that “people get really attached to the University of Kansas.”

In trying to describe this intangible sense one senior told us, “I’ve found a place here – got locked in and stayed.” Another senior said, “Finding my niche made it peaceful here.” The “kind” nature of people on campus, characterized by some as part of being in the Midwest and by others as a unique feature of KU, was another reason given for this connectivity.

Admittedly, the degree of connection varies from person to person and school-to-school. Yet, most agreed that a “welcoming” attitude permeates the campus.

Professional and Effective Academic Advising

Deliberate and professionally delivered academic advising seeks to increase student satisfaction with and success in academic and community life. Surveys of students on the quality of student life and services indicated that academic advising was not up to the standard desired by faculty or administrators. One administrator explained that students “needed a closer tie to an individual...to feel they were connected to the University.” According to the NSSE data, KU’s seniors assessed advising more favorably than the first-year students.

In 1998, KU established the FSAC to create a smaller university feel at this large, research institution. FSAC advisors are professionally trained; recommend sound, consistently administered educational practice (e.g., one large lecture class per semester); and exhibit a noteworthy level of care throughout their advising practices. One faculty member declared that the FSAC was the “best thing that’s happened to undergraduates.”

A student waiting for an appointment with his advisor explained, “It’s no hassle to come in [to the FSAC]. I come here anytime I have a question about enrollment.” Other undergraduates described similar use of the FSAC.

According to the students we talked with, advisors have a knack for figuring out where and how a student can succeed. Center and faculty advisors have a “free hand” when advising students about connecting to the University. They look for “non-connected” students and suggest ways to get connected to the community. One professor of mathematics told us, “We can talk about anything in this office.” Their suggestions extend beyond the classroom and include queries about clubs, organizations, and out-of-classroom activities in which the student is or could be involved. In the words of a student government leader, it is common for instructors, not just advisors, to recommend activities in which the student can become involved. “You’d be really good at this,” were words from a faculty member that spurred a student respondent to become involved in ways she had never considered.

Support for Diversity

Although we discussed the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) earlier, its work in creating a welcoming environment for underrepresented students merits mention again. The Director described his office as an “academic support” office. One way this is demonstrated is that the OMA staff participates with the CTE on diversity training for faculty and GTAs. Another less visible way is the message sent to students by the OMA staff. Students of color often connect to the campus via OMA. OMA staff members discuss the importance of connecting with faculty. They help faculty and students understand that communication will help “lower the wall” that sometimes exist between students (in this case students of color) and faculty.

Promising Practices:

- Concerted effort, by faculty members and staff, to actively connect students to KU.
- Faculty, staff and administrators make themselves and resources available to ensure that students succeed academically, personally and socially.
- Effective academic advising: Trained professionals use expertise and interpersonal skills to encourage students and to engage them in their learning experience.
- Office of Multicultural Affairs that recognizes importance of integrating diversity throughout various aspects of the institution.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The University of Kansas is an engaging public research university. Our visits helped us to better understand why it performed so well on the NSSE survey and why its graduation rates are also better than predicted compared with other similar size universities. We very much appreciate the important insights we gained about the undergraduate experience at KU. Of course, two multiple-day visits are not adequate to develop a comprehensive and complete understanding of all aspects of that experience. However, we believe that KU has optimized the combination of large lectures and small classes effectively to make the most of limited resources and talented teachers. The institution's emphasis on undergraduate teaching and learning is commendable. In this final section, we briefly discuss some potential areas for enhancing the undergraduate experience.

As with most other institutions, KU continues to be challenged by using the variety of human and cultural differences represented on campus in educationally purposeful ways. One senior administrator reflected that KU has historically been "pretty white, upscale and liberal...and we could do a better job of enrolling more students of color." An African American woman student told us, "KU students don't leave their comfort zones." A senior white woman student pointed out that "it's politically incorrect not to interact, especially around homosexuality." Another senior female student of color explained to us how difficult it is "to be a pioneer." One student, citing diversity as an area of student complaint, related that the University values diversity but not strongly enough. She felt that KU was too homogenous to craft the type of experiences that lead to understanding.

At the same time, NSSE results indicating that KU students have more frequent discussions with peers who held different beliefs, combined with several quality multicultural programs suggest that KU is responding to the challenges of diversity. However, although some students indicated that KU students seem to be content about diversity, other students had reservations. A female student of color commented that the Chancellor had achieved all his goals except diversity. It was "frustrating to hear so much talk and nothing is happening." She indicated that this situation was a "major concern to minorities at KU." The variety of student and faculty opinions regarding diversity suggests that KU (along with most colleges and universities) has a long way to go in terms of creating an environment in which diversity in its many forms is valued and appreciated.

KU executive leaders are introducing some innovative ways to link in and out-of-classroom learning. A recent initiative to connect academic and student services is a source of hope for broadening the approach to student learning. An administrator commented, "If students are going to have good access to services, then the people who run those services have to have access to each other." The recent hiring of the Vice

Provost for Student Success, the senior student affairs officer responsible for administrative leadership across the spectrum of student and academic services, student life, enrollment management, advising and retention, and student support, reflects the reorganization and streamlining of services to support student learning.

Learning communities are in the early stages at KU. Plans are to phase in thematic learning communities (TLCs) over the next few years and to offer approximately a dozen options in at least five different residence halls in Fall 2003. These communities will be focused around a theme and participants will usually live on the same floor in a residence hall and take two classes together as well as a special one credit seminar that will help connect the classes and help students learn skills to succeed in the University. For example, "Law and Logic" (Pre-law) involves three courses: POLS 110 Introduction to U.S. Politics; PHIL 148 Reason and Argument, and LA&S 101 Thematic Seminar Course. This TLC integrates the structure, political processes, and policy of the United States' government with the theory and practice of logical analysis. Students apply the information and skills acquired to a legal context in discussing policy and analyzing legal arguments. Some focus on pre-law preparation, the law school experience, and exploration of legal and alternative careers is also being incorporated. There are also TLCs for students who are undecided about their majors.

Each community will have a faculty sponsor and an upper division undergraduate student in residence. Faculty members receive some support (\$500 administered by the Center for Teaching Excellence) to fund in-class projects and co-curricular experiences and also some dining hall passes to encourage interaction with students outside the classroom. Faculty members seem to be supportive of these plans. "The thematic learning communities are an excellent way to encourage collaboration between faculty and students and to increase learning and thinking outside the classroom...I think this is a great way to promote interactions between incoming students, more seasoned students, and faculty members outside the classroom," said a faculty member enthusiastically. Given the nationally proven success of learning communities to enhance undergraduate education and the enthusiasm of some faculty members, KU should continue to involve faculty in the creation of additional learning communities (the first learning communities were offered in Fall 2003).

KU's emphasis on the Freshman Sophomore Advising Center appears to be well placed. According to NSSE survey results, about 63% of first-year students indicated that the quality of academic advising was "good" or "excellent." Discussions with students and advisors also revealed positive views about the FSAC. However the transition between the FSAC and upper-division advising appears to be underdeveloped.

Our time on campus confirmed that we made a good choice by including KU in the DEEP project. Many other colleges and universities will benefit from learning about KU's policies and practices along with those at other schools in the DEEP project. At the same time, even educationally effective institutions such as KU have areas in which they can improve, and some of the schools in the DEEP project are using their Reports toward this end. Here are some examples:

- One institution included its DEEP Report as a part of their campus accreditation process.
- Faculty members at another DEEP school used the report to spark dialogue at a faculty retreat and generated recommendations for curriculum improvement and development.
- Governing board members and senior administrators at a third institution intend to combine the DEEP findings with NSSE and other institutional quantitative data to ignite discussion at their annual retreat. They believe this will give them a greater understanding of their students and how to best meet their needs.
- Another school plans to use the DEEP report to focus on inclusion strategies that will assist the institution in becoming a more diverse campus community and help it explore whether or not its institutional mission is clear and explicit in its diversity emphasis, and whether or not the campus enacts a commitment to inclusion.

Perhaps KU can productively adapt one or more of these applications to further enhance the quality of undergraduate education. We would be grateful if you would pass along to us the ways the institution uses this Report or its NSSE data, now and in the future.

The data collection portion of Project DEEP has concluded. We intend to share what we have learned from KU and the other 19 colleges and universities in national presentations and publications over the coming months. Again, we deeply appreciate the opportunity to visit and learn about effective educational practice at the University of Kansas and trust you will be pleased with the way in which we portray your fine institution.

Appendix A: NSSE Information

The National Survey of Student Engagement

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is supported by a grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts and is cosponsored by The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and The Pew Forum on Undergraduate Learning. The NSSE project provides colleges and universities with valuable information about students' views of collegiate quality by annually administering a specially designed survey, *The College Student Report*.

The Report is a versatile, research-based tool for gathering information that will focus local and national conversations on learning-centered indicators of quality in undergraduate education. *The Report* is useful in several ways:

- institutional improvement – as a diagnostic tool to identify areas in which a school can enhance students' educational experiences and student learning.
- benchmarking instrument – establishing regional and national norms of educational practices and performance by sector.
- public accountability – documenting and improving institutional effectiveness over time.

Designed by national experts, *The College Student Report* asks undergraduate students about their college experiences – how they spend their time, what they feel they've gained from their classes, their assessment of the quality of their interactions with faculty and friends, and other important indicators. Extensive research indicates that good educational practices in the classroom and interactions with others, such as faculty and peers, are directly related to high-quality student outcomes. *The Report* focuses on these practices.

The Report is administered each spring to random samples of first-year students and seniors at public and private four-year colleges and universities. It can be completed either via a traditional paper questionnaire or on the World Wide Web. A demonstration of the Web version and a copy of the paper version of *The Report* are available at <http://www.iub.edu/~nsse>.

The random sampling method ensures that the results are comparable, meaningful, credible, and usable for institutional self-study and improvement efforts as well as consortium comparisons and national benchmarking. After your institution provides a student data file and customized invitation letters, NSSE handles the sampling and all aspects of the data collection including mailing surveys directly to students, collecting, checking and scoring completed surveys, and conducting follow-ups with non-respondents. Guidance for the NSSE project is provided by a national advisory board comprised of distinguished educators and a technical advisory panel made up of experts in institutional research and assessment.

Summary of the NSSE Benchmarks of Effective Education Practice

Level of Academic Challenge

Challenging intellectual and creative work is central to student learning and collegiate quality. A number of questions from NSSE's instrument, *The College Student Report*, correspond to three integral components of academic challenge. Several questions represent the nature and amount of assigned academic work, some reflect the complexity of cognitive tasks presented to students, and several others ask about the standards faculty members use to evaluate student performance. Specifically these questions are related to:

- Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, rehearsing)
- Reading and writing
- Using higher-order thinking skills
- Working harder than students thought they could to meet an instructor's standards
- An institutional environment that emphasizes studying and academic work

Active and Collaborative Learning

Students learn more when they are intensely involved in their education and have opportunities to think about and apply what they are learning in different settings. And when students collaborate with others in solving problems or mastering difficult material they acquire valuable skills that prepare them to deal with the messy, unscripted problems they will encounter daily during and after college. Survey questions that contribute to this benchmark include:

- Asking questions in class or contributing to class discussions
- Making class presentations
- Working with other students on projects during class
- Working with classmates outside-of-class to prepare class assignments
- Tutoring or teaching other students
- Participating in community-based projects as part of a regular courses
- Discussing ideas from readings or classes with others

Student Interactions with Faculty Members

In general, the more contact students have with their teachers the better. Working with a professor on a research project or serving with faculty members on a college committee or community organization lets students see first-hand how experts identify and solve practical problems. Through such interactions teachers become role models, mentors, and guides for continuous, life-long learning. Questions used in this benchmark include:

- Discussing grades or assignments with an instructor
- Talking about career plans with a faculty member or advisor
- Discussing ideas from readings or classes with faculty members outside-of-class
- Working with faculty members on activities other than coursework (committees, orientation, student-life activities, etc.)
- Getting prompt feedback on academic performance
- Working with a faculty member on a research project

Enriching Educational Experiences

Educationally effective colleges and universities offer many different opportunities inside and outside the classroom that complement the goals of the academic program. One of the most important is exposure to diversity, from which students learn valuable things about themselves and gain an appreciation for other cultures. Technology is increasingly being used to facilitate the learning process and – when done appropriately – can increase collaboration between peers and instructors, which actively engages students in their learning. Other valuable educational experiences include internships, community service, and senior capstone courses that provide students with opportunities to synthesize, integrate, and apply their knowledge. As a result, learning is deeper, more meaningful, and ultimately more useful because what students know becomes a part of who they are.

Questions from the survey representing these kinds of experiences include:

- Talking with students with different religious beliefs, political opinions, or values
- Talking with students of a different race or ethnicity
- An institutional climate that encourages contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds
- Using electronic technology to discuss or complete assignments
- Participating in:
 - internships or field experiences
 - community service or volunteer work
 - foreign language coursework
 - study abroad
 - independent study or self-designed major
 - co-curricular activities
 - a culminating senior experience

Supportive Campus Environment

Students perform better and are more satisfied at colleges that are committed to their success and cultivate positive working and social relations among different groups on campus. Survey questions contributing to this benchmark describe a campus environment that:

- Helps students succeed academically
- Helps students cope with non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)
- Helps students thrive socially
- Promotes supportive relations between students and their peers, faculty members, and administrative staff

Appendix B: DEEP Team Biographies

Bruce Jacobs

Bruce Jacobs currently serves as the Vice Chancellor of Auxiliary Services and Programs at Indiana University Bloomington. His areas of responsibility include housing, the union, campus transportation (bus, parking and motor pool), the auditorium, bookstore, campus ID card services, duplicating and photo services, conferences, and marketing. Jacobs has worked at six different colleges and universities: SUNY at Brockport, Dutchess Community College, Southwest Texas State University, Gettysburg College, Rutgers University and Indiana University (IU). He has worked in residence halls, student activities, Greek affairs, special events (athletics and homecoming), judicial affairs, student unions, and orientation. Jacobs also holds an adjunct Assistant Professors position in the Higher Education and Student Affairs (HESA) program at IU where he currently teaches an Administrative Theory class in the Masters Program. In addition, he has served as the coordinator of the HESA masters program at IU. His BS (political science) and MS (education) are from SUNY, Brockport, and his doctorate is from IU in HESA.

Jillian Kinzie

Jillian Kinzie is Associate Director of the NSSE Institute for Effective Educational Practice and Project Manager of the Documenting Effective Educational Practices (DEEP) initiative. She earned her Ph.D. in Higher Education with a minor in Women's Studies at Indiana University Bloomington. Prior to this, she held a visiting faculty appointment in the Higher Education and Student Affairs department at Indiana University, and worked as assistant dean in an interdisciplinary residential college and as an administrator in student affairs. In 2001, she was awarded a *Student Choice Award for Outstanding Faculty* at Indiana University. Kinzie has co-authored a monograph on theories of teaching and learning, and has conducted research on women in undergraduate science, retention of underrepresented students, and college choice.

George D. Kuh

George Kuh is Chancellor's Professor of Higher Education at Indiana University Bloomington. He directs the National Survey of Student Engagement and the College Student Experiences Questionnaire Research Program. George received the B.A. from Luther College (1968), the M.S. from the St. Cloud State University (1971), and the Ph.D. from the University of Iowa (1975). He's taught at Kirkwood Community College and the University Of Iowa Colleges of Education and Dentistry. At Indiana University, he served as chairperson of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies (1982-84), Associate Dean for Academic Affairs in the School of Education (1985-88), and Associate Dean of the Faculties for the Bloomington campus (1997-2000). Widely published, George's interests include assessment, institutional improvement, and campus cultures. He has consulted with more than 140 institutions of higher education and educational agencies in the United States and abroad. George has received awards for his research contributions from the American College Personnel Association, Association for

Institutional Research, Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE), the Council of Independent Colleges, and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators. Past-president of ASHE, he serves on several editorial boards including About Campus, Change, and Liberal Education. In addition, he received the Educational Leadership Award for Teaching from St. Cloud State University, several Teaching Excellence Recognition Awards from Indiana University, the Dean's Award for outstanding contributions by a faculty member to the quality of undergraduate life at IUB, and the prestigious Tracy Sonneborn Award from Indiana University for a distinguished record of scholarship and teaching.

Richard Lynch

Richard Lynch is a Research Fellow at the Center of Inquiry in the Liberal Arts at Wabash College. He taught for two years at Wabash College as a Visiting Assistant Professor of Philosophy, and for three years prior to that as a Teaching Fellow at Boston College, where he earned the Donald T. White Teaching Excellence Award. He is currently completing his doctorate in philosophy (Boston College), and holds an M.A. from Northwestern University (Philosophy) and a B.A. from the University of Texas at Austin (Plan II Honors). Publications include scholarly articles on Hegel, Habermas, Foucault, and others, as well as translations from French.

Kathleen Manning

Kathleen Manning, an Associate Professor, has taught at the University of Vermont since 1989 in the Higher Education and Student Affairs (HESA) graduate program. Since 1997, she has been the coordinator of the HESA program. In 1992, she received the Kroepsch-Maurice Award for Teaching Excellence, a University-wide teaching award. During the spring 2003 semester, she undertook a Fulbright Fellowship at Beijing Normal University in China.

Dr. Manning conducts research and writes in the areas of organizational theory, qualitative research methodology, and cultural pluralism. Published books include *Rituals, Ceremonies and Cultural Meaning in Higher Education* (2000), *Giving Voice to Critical Campus Issues: Qualitative research in student affairs* (2000), and *Enhancing the Multicultural Campus Environment* (1992, co-authored with Frances K. Stage). She currently has a book contract with Brunner-Routledge to publish *The Research Process on Campus: Approaches and Methods* (co-edited with Frances K. Stage). Dr. Manning has a Ph.D. in higher education with a minor in anthropology from Indiana University; a M.S. and Ed.S. in counseling and student personnel services from the State University of New York at Albany; and a B.A. in biology from Marist College.

Charles C. Schroeder

Charles C. Schroeder received his B.A. and M.A. degrees from Austin College and his Doctorate (1972) from Oregon State University. During the past 23 years, he has served as the Chief Student Affairs Officer at Mercer University, Saint Louis University,

Georgia Institute of Technology, and University of Missouri-Columbia. In 2001, he became a Professor of Higher Education in the Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis department at the University of Missouri-Columbia. He has assumed various leadership roles in the American College Personnel Association serving as President in 1986 and 1993 and as Executive Editor of *About Campus: Enriching the Student Learning Experience*. Dr. Schroeder has authored over 60 articles and published a book in 1994 with Phyllis Mable entitled *Realizing the Educational Potential of Residence Halls*.