



STRENGTHENING OUR CAPACITY TO SERVE

NORTHERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY'S 2003-2008 STRATEGIC AGENDA



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A **T NO TIME HAS AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION BEEN MORE IMPORTANT** to the future of our communities, our states and our nation. Advanced education is critical to ensuring we have an informed citizenry prepared to live, work and participate in a democratic society. Cutting-edge knowledge, innovation, creativity and critical thinking – all of which are inherent in higher education – drive our capacity to address society's most complex and formidable challenges, challenges that impact the quality of life for our entire region, now and for generations to come. Today's complex, global economy depends upon advanced knowledge and knowledge workers. For our region to be economically competitive, it is essential that we provide for the learning needs of a highly educated workforce.

Therefore, as Northern Kentucky University charts its course for the next five years, we continue to embrace our responsibility to the intellectual, social, economic, cultural and civic vitality of our region. We recognize the needs of our communities and our unique ability to meet those needs. This strategic plan will guide us as we strengthen our capacity to serve.

In the fall of 1997, Northern Kentucky University embarked on a strategic planning process called *Vision, Values and Voices*. Through more than 30 group conversations involving more than 500 campus and community leaders, the University established an institutional vision, a set of core values and six strategic priority areas intended to guide our decision making and action for five years. As a result of that planning process and the intentional choices that followed, the University is today larger, more diverse, more international, more competitive for the region's best prepared high school graduates, more deeply engaged in our region, better able to attract and retain talented faculty and staff and better prepared to support the success of our students. On almost every dimension, the University has moved to an exciting new level of development that is being recognized at the local, state and national levels.

In the fall of 2002, five years after the first set of conversations, the University hosted another round of conversations to assess our current performance and guide the development of our future priorities. We held 34 conversations involving more than 550 people from throughout our campus as well as from every corner of our metropolitan region.

What did these conversations tell us?



VOICES

There is widespread public pride and support for the University. From the 34 conversations, we repeatedly heard strong affirmation of the path the University has followed over the past five years and for the quality of our academic programs, the “up close and personal” character of our educational experience, the strength of our graduates and our partnership with the community in order to address issues of public concern. We were repeatedly reminded to preserve and enhance these strengths, with particular emphasis placed on the importance of enhancing quality even if it means increasing cost.

Campus representatives focused their conversations inward, offering some perspectives not heard in the community conversations. Faculty, staff and students see the University as a positive environment in which to work, teach and learn. They urged us to strengthen the campus experience for commuter and residential students as well as for nontraditional students; to maintain our commitment to small classes and one-on-one contact with faculty; to recruit, develop and retain a group of strong campus leaders at every level; and to assure a seamless transition for community college transfer students, especially those from Gateway Community and Technical College. Campus community members also emphasized the need to improve campus facilities and the external physical environment of the campus. Finally, they stressed the need for additional investment to support the growth that has occurred over the past five years.

Community groups strongly supported the University’s current commitment to public engagement and urged us to do more of it, including: enhancing our involvement with P-12 education, increasing collaborations concerning economic development, providing more support for local governments and nonprofit organizations and providing a neutral platform for addressing the critical challenges that confront our region.

Campus and community conversations revealed strong consensus on the importance of serving increasing numbers of students, particularly nontraditional students, students of color and international students as well as upper-division and graduate students. There was also consensus that programs should be added to meet student demand and regional needs; that academic programs should be coupled with experiential learning; and that the University should better communicate and market its specific strengths. Finally, there was strong consensus to keep liberal arts at the core of the student undergraduate experience.



While each of the 34 conversations had a slightly different emphasis, there was one message that we heard consistently: the University’s development over the past five years has been striking. **Keep doing what you are doing and do more of it!**



VISION

Given the unequivocal endorsement of NKU’s recent direction, it is appropriate that we affirm the vision and values we adopted in 1998. At that time, we chose to identify ourselves, first and foremost, as a metropolitan university, which signifies far more than simply residing in the metropolitan region. We must be good citizens of the region, contributing significantly to the intellectual, social, economic and civic vitality of our metropolitan region. In turn, the metropolitan region provides us with a rich array of advanced learning opportunities, real-world challenges to be addressed, exciting research opportunities and a source of knowledge and experience that can strengthen, enhance and enrich every dimension of our University mission.

Our vision, which remains unchanged since 1998, is strongly aligned with the needs of our learners and of the metropolitan region we serve:

Northern Kentucky University will become a preeminent, learner-centered, metropolitan university recognized for its contributions to the intellectual, social, economic, cultural and civic vitality of its region and of the Commonwealth.



CORE VALUES

Over the next five years, we will continue to be guided by the core values that were established five years ago and affirmed through the most recent set of community and University conversations. These values inform our actions and bind us together as an academic community.

LEARNER-CENTERED

We are committed to placing the learner at the center of all that we do. We will serve the learner through our core mission to discover, interpret, apply and transmit knowledge. As a university, we are a community of learners capable of adaptation and improvement based on new knowledge and insights.

EXCELLENCE

We are committed to the highest standards of excellence in everything that we do — as judged not only by ourselves but also by those we serve — and to a process of continuous quality improvement based on a culture of evidence.

ACCESS WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO SUCCEED

We are committed to lifelong public access to education and expert knowledge and to ensuring that learners enrolled in the University have the preparation required to succeed. We measure our success by the accomplishments, the commitments and the satisfaction of our graduates.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

We are committed to treating the metropolitan region as an extension of our campus. We will build partnerships throughout the region that both serve the learning needs of the public and enhance the learning opportunities available to our faculty, staff and students.

INTELLECTUAL AND CREATIVE FREEDOM

We are committed to intellectual and creative freedom and to the open expression of ideas in a way that supports scholarship and the advanced learning process.

MULTICULTURALISM

We are committed to advancing multicultural understanding, within both the University and the community, as an educational and civic priority.

INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY

We are committed to innovative approaches for achieving our vision and will create a campus environment that encourages and rewards creativity and innovation.

COLLEGIALITY AND COLLABORATION

We are committed to building a University community characterized by open communication and shared responsibility for decisions. We will build a culture of collegiality and collaboration within and between the University and the public we serve.



2003 – 2008 GUIDING ASSUMPTIONS

In 1998, when we developed our last strategic plan, Kentucky’s postsecondary educational reform was new; the Commonwealth’s revenue picture was bright; new resources were flowing into postsecondary education; the governor had made postsecondary reform a defining element of his administration; and NKU had embarked on a new five-year strategic plan under the leadership of a new administrative team.

Today’s picture is quite different. The economy is weak and uncertain; postsecondary educational reform is no longer new, and it is unclear whether Kentucky will sustain its 1997 commitments to strengthening postsecondary education in general and NKU in particular. Within this context, our strategic priorities will continue to be guided by the following assumptions:

- Kentucky’s revenue picture will continue to be weaker than in previous years, and competition for state resources will intensify. NKU will benefit from aggressive and creative actions to ensure an adequate financial base.
- Institutions viewed as serving the state’s postsecondary agenda, advancing their region’s economic development and improving the quality of life in the Commonwealth will be better positioned for future state funding. The University must demonstrate and document its strong contributions to meeting the challenges and aspirations of our region and the Commonwealth.
- With the creation of Gateway Community and Technical College, NKU can expect to see an enrollment shift towards larger numbers of upper-division, transfer and graduate students while serving an ever-increasing and better prepared student body. We will benefit from continuing our intentional partnership with

Gateway and clearly explaining to our multiple publics the different missions of each institution.

- Competition for students will continue to increase. This competition will come from colleges and universities located in Kentucky, in neighboring states, in other parts of the nation and around the globe. It will come from traditional institutions and from the increasing number of for-profit universities that are taking positions in our metropolitan region through face-to-face and online education. The University's ability to compete will depend on a combination of perceived academic quality, affordability, ease of access, quality of campus life and exceptional service.
- Today's college students are older, more diverse and more engaged in work and other adult responsibilities than ever before. They demand educational access where, when and how it is most convenient for their schedules and responsibilities. They expect quality, service and value.
- Competition to recruit and retain talented faculty and staff will continue to increase. In order to be competitive in this regard, the University must offer competitive salaries and benefits, provide generous professional development opportunities and maintain a satisfying and supportive work environment.



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Our 2003-2008 strategic priorities cluster around seven areas: broadening access, enhancing academic quality, strengthening public engagement, enriching the student experience, advancing our full mission, improving campus facilities and environment and ensuring institutional effectiveness.

BROADEN ACCESS

In order to sustain our commitment to broad-based access and to ensure that no qualified students are denied the opportunity for a college degree, no matter what their financial circumstances, we will:

- Continue to grow to meet student demand consistent with our available financial and physical resources.
- Exceed our CPE goals for enrollment, retention and graduation.

- Continue our efforts to enroll and retain a more diverse student body, including more students of color, international students and nontraditional students.
- Increase our enrollments of upper-division undergraduate students and graduate professional students.
- Expand opportunities for working adults to earn undergraduate and graduate degrees through off-campus programs, web-based programs and weekend and evening cohort programs.
- Increase need-based financial aid to support a larger number of students and to offset tuition increases.

ENHANCE ACADEMIC QUALITY

To further enhance the University's overall academic quality, consistent with our mission, we will:

- Promote and support centers of academic excellence that build on our strengths and align with regional needs.
- Strengthen our commitment to "up close and personal," as a defining quality of the NKU experience, by strengthening academic advising, retaining small classes and ensuring convenient access to faculty.
- Ensure that students admitted to NKU are likely to succeed through implementation of a coordinated enrollment plan including admission standards, assessment and services.
- Encourage and support student participation in research and creative activities as a defining characteristic of the undergraduate experience and a rewarding priority of faculty performance.
- Compete for high-performing students and leverage our scholarship money to support merit-based awards.
- Continue to strengthen our capacity to recruit, reward and retain the best faculty, staff and administrative talent through competitive starting salaries, performance-based annual salary increases

that exceed inflation, a strong benefits package and ample professional development opportunities.

- Hire a more diverse faculty to ensure that our students learn with faculty who reflect a breadth of experiences and perspectives.
- Ensure that our criteria and processes for reviewing and evaluating faculty – pre- and post-tenure – are clear and consistently applied and that they promote academic quality and full engagement in the life of the University.
- Ensure that our library is structured and supported to meet the needs of our students and faculty as we continue to grow.
- Encourage and support further internationalization of the curriculum and increased opportunity for both faculty and students to work and study abroad.

STRENGTHEN PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

To further strengthen our engagement with the region and its communities, we will:

- Expand our commitment to the metropolitan region by making a University-wide commitment to:
 - > Enhance P-12 education through quality pre-service and in-service programs for teachers, partnerships with P-12 schools, summer enrichment programs for youth and building in the minds of elementary and middle school students a commitment to attend postsecondary education.
 - > Support regional economic expansion by preparing well-educated graduates in fields that align with the employment needs in the region, building bridges between the business and University communities and providing education and training to support economic competitiveness.
 - > Assist and support local government and community decision making through the application of academic expertise.
 - > Support the local nonprofit community by contributing to capacity building.
- Sponsor programs and encourage public dialogue to address the critical and sometimes controversial issues facing our community, our nation and our world.
- Expand access to the visual and performing arts, particularly in those communities that have limited access to the arts.
- Strengthen our communication with our various publics through an improved web presence, expanded communication channels including WNKU and more widespread marketing of our institutional strengths.



ENRICH THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

At the heart of any university is the quality of interaction between the institution and its students. In order to enhance this interaction, we will:

- Expand opportunities for students to engage in “community-based learning” that enriches their collegiate experience and enhances student employment prospects upon graduation. These experiences include cooperative education, internships and service learning.
- Foster participation in curricular and co-curricular activities that build strong bonds between the student and the University.
- Expand student and academic organizations and enhance cultural, social and recreational programs in order to serve all of our student groups: commuting, residential and nontraditional students.
- Increase support for intercollegiate athletics to provide a high-quality experience for student-athletes and spectators and build campus spirit and identity.
- Expand services for nontraditional learners who are balancing their responsibilities as students with a broad range of other adult responsibilities.
- Provide our students with service that exceeds their expectations.

ADVANCE THE FULL MISSION OF A METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

A major challenge for all metropolitan universities is to align all internal elements to support excellence across the full breadth of the teaching, research and public engagement mission. To strengthen NKU’s internal alignment, we will:

- Expect each academic unit to serve the full breadth of our teaching, research and public engagement mission in ways that are consistent with their expertise and disciplinary focus.
- Increase the number of tenured and tenure-track faculty in order to enhance our capacity for serving the full breadth of the mission.



- Recruit and retain faculty who have the interest and ability to assure that our full mission is served.
- Assure that faculty and unit incentives and rewards are aligned to support our full mission and that faculty have the opportunity periodically to shift their teaching, research and public engagement emphasis in concert with departmental missions and goals.
- Expand financial and infrastructure support for research and other forms of scholarly activity, particularly that which is aligned with the needs of our region.
- Recruit, develop and reward academic leaders at all levels who have the capacity and commitment to lead on behalf of the full academic mission.

IMPROVE THE CAMPUS FACILITIES AND ENVIRONMENT

A major pressure point for the University is our severe space limitation. In order to address space needs, we will:

- Provide facilities that enhance teaching and learning by:
 - > Renovating the old science building to become a general-purpose academic building.
 - > Completing the Landrum renovation.
 - > Providing a “one stop” enrollment center for current students.
 - > Renovating faculty offices where needed.
- Provide facilities that attract prospective students and support the full range of activities appropriate to our campus by:
 - > Constructing a new student union.
 - > Gaining approval for construction of a 7,000-seat regional special events center.
 - > Developing a new athletic complex and renovating existing athletic facilities.
- Improve the campus environment by:
 - > Improving signage to make the campus more easily accessible to students and the community.
 - > Developing and beautifying the plaza and lake areas of the campus.
 - > Improving the Nunn Drive and Three Mile Road entrances to the campus.
- Prepare the campus and environs for our future needs by:
 - > Working with NKU’s related foundations to attract economic development projects that will invest in or locate in the area surrounding the campus and both draw upon and contribute to the University’s mission and strengths.
 - > Gaining approval and financial support for

construction of the campus loop road and widening of Johns Hill Road.

ENSURE INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

In order to enhance institutional effectiveness and contain costs, we will:

- Align all elements of the campus to support the strategic priorities and outcomes that are important to our future.
- Eliminate inefficiencies and unnecessary bureaucratic complexities.
- Review our organizational structure, our existing policies and procedures and the planning and budgeting processes to ensure they are aligned to support maximum institutional effectiveness.
- Provide opportunities for faculty and staff development that will increase their effectiveness and expand their skills.



SUPPORTING OUR CAPACITY TO SERVE

NKU must have a stronger financial base to achieve our strategic priorities and become what our region needs and expects us to become. NKU’s per-student funding is the lowest of Kentucky’s eight public universities and the lowest when compared to our 19 benchmark universities. According to the Council on Postsecondary Education, the University is \$26 million underfunded. The campus is also projected to be 18 percent under-built by 2006.

No single source can provide all of the funding for the University. Rather, it requires funding from numerous sources to achieve the level of support required to fulfill the expectations of those we serve. The Commonwealth, our students, private donors, federal, state and corporate grant-makers and our own revenue-generating capability are all vital contributors to the University’s future.

The Commonwealth must fully fund our growth and continue efforts to achieve equity in our funding relative to both our



benchmark institutions and the other Kentucky comprehensive institutions. Without this full partnership with the state, we will be unable to continue growing and unable to expand our community partnerships in support of the challenges that confront our metropolitan region. We will need the full support of our elected leaders, our business and community leaders and northern Kentucky citizenry to develop a comprehensive plan for achieving adequate and equitable funding. NKU is more heavily dependent on student tuition than any other Kentucky university. In order to expand other revenue sources, we will:

- Continue to set and achieve ambitious goals related to private donor support. In 1999, our annual giving was less than \$2 million. Today, we are raising more than \$10 million annually, which must be sustained and enhanced in the future. In the fall of 2004 we will celebrate the successful completion of our \$40 million *Shaping Dreams* campaign, and we will follow it with a series of mini-campaigns in support of our strategic priorities.
- Increase grant activity, obtaining a greater share of the funds available from the federal and state governments. Our efforts will focus on competitive grants and other federal and state funding opportunities.
- Create financial incentives for the campus to become more entrepreneurial in its academic and service areas. This includes further expansion of summer session, weekend and evening programs, distance education, noncredit certificate and other noncredit programs and the creation and/or expansion of academic programs and services that can generate additional revenue for the campus.

- Look for opportunities to reduce costs. We will encourage creative and innovative teaching methods that preserve quality while reducing instructional costs. We must consider offering larger sections of some classes in order to preserve our overall commitment to “up close and personal.”
- Create incentives for cost savings that result from increased efficiencies.
- Eliminate processes and structures that add cost without adding value.
- Continue to be very disciplined in the way that we link strategic planning and budgeting. We must build a budget reserve, establish an institutional financial plan that considers the forces that will impact our future and implement annual accountability measures in order to measure our progress.



Our 2003-2008 strategic priorities are ambitious and will require commitment from the campus, the region and the Commonwealth. Achievement of these priorities will require us to be innovative, to take some risks and to be very focused, intentional and disciplined in our work.

NKU’s future rests on our ability to:

- Enhance excellence
- Remain affordable
- Expand access
- Preserve our “up close and personal” approach to education
- Aggressively engage the public agenda
- Provide service beyond expectations
- Always keep the learner at the center of everything that we do

In combination, these qualities will be the defining characteristics of the University and will take us to yet another level in our capacity to serve the needs and aspirations of our students and our metropolitan region.

STRENGTHENING OUR CAPACITY TO SERVE

NORTHERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY'S 2003–2008 STRATEGIC AGENDA

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