

**Committee on Equal Opportunities
Visit to Kentucky State University
Summary and Recommendations
February 20-21, 2007**

Adopted by the CEO: April 16, 2007

Revised: April 15, 2007

Executive Summary

Purpose and Process: The purpose of the campus visit is to allow members of the Committee on Equal Opportunities to review institutional activities that support the objectives of *The Kentucky Plan for Equal Opportunities*. The CEO is charged with monitoring institutional progress toward implementing *The Kentucky Plan for Equal Opportunities* and the Partnership Agreement with the U. S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights. Monitoring is completed through data analysis and campus visits.

The CEO visited Kentucky State University February 20-21, 2007, to meet with campus leaders, students, faculty, and other members of the campus community. The meetings were designed to give committee members an opportunity to hear from selected members of the university community. Campus visits are not meant to gather scientific, empirical data, but rather to learn first-hand about the success of equal opportunity plan implementation on the KSU campus.

Core Focus: The CEO visit begins by identifying the general focus for review and discussion with institutional leadership and the campus community. The committee's goal was to learn about the university's strategies and leadership in implementing the objectives of the plan and recommendations from the previous two campus visits and the results of those efforts. As a historically black institution, the committee's focus was a little different than the focus at the traditionally white institutions.

Report Summary: Kentucky State University, the Commonwealth's historically black university, is a comprehensive institution that promotes a liberal arts curriculum. Located in the state capital, the 1890 land grant institution offers the associate, bachelors, and a limited number of master's degrees, as well as a post-baccalaureate certificate. Additionally, thousands of state government employees are served annually through their enrollment at KSU, as well as attendance at seminars and workshops; many have also benefited by earning undergraduate and graduate degrees from KSU. Kentucky state government training capabilities are also under the auspices of the Office of Government Training, located at Kentucky State University. As the major repository for the collection of books, records, and artifacts relative to the history and status of African-American citizens of the Commonwealth and elsewhere, KSU supplies materials for both casual and

scholarly research. The city of Frankfort is easily accessible by major highways and is within a short drive of Lexington, Louisville, and Cincinnati.

Strategies used to implement the recommendations from the previous two visits show that KSU has demonstrated various degrees of success. During the opening presentation, KSU administrators reported a 137 percent increase in the number of applicants received for admission (6,279 in fall 2006). Additionally, students currently matriculate from 28 states: 66.2 percent are Kentucky residents, 11.6 percent are from Ohio, 5.9 percent from Michigan, 4.3 percent from Illinois, and 3.1 percent from Indiana. The majority of the Kentucky resident students are from Fayette (10.3 percent), Jefferson (13.3 percent), and Franklin Counties (42.9 percent), according to KSU.

Under the leadership of President Mary Evans-Sias, the university reported that its student enrollment has steadily increased since 2004. KSU indicated that 2,492 students enrolled in fall 2006, an 8 percent increase over five years (2,314 students in 2001 and 2,500 students in 2006). Administrators acknowledged that, like most public institutions, KSU faces enrollment and retention challenges. The primary challenges to access and diversity, as stated by KSU, are financial, sociological, and preparation.

The university identified a number of initiatives for Hispanic outreach to engage the community in addressing the following challenges:

- Poverty
- Cultural representation
- Immigration status
- Work schedule

Administrators identified various initiatives that were implemented to retain students. They include an early alert system, an intervention plan for students on probation, block scheduling for incoming freshmen, a new student orientation, graduation tracking, and policy setting. Administrators noted that students utilize KSU's advising services, but not as much as they should. If a student does not meet with his/her advisor, their registration for the new semester is placed in abeyance until the student meets with an advisor to discuss their academic schedule.

KSU is committed to achieving the goals and objectives outlined in the Kentucky Plan and Partnership Agreement. The president believes very strongly that "diversity enhances the educational experiences of both African American and white students." She stated that KSU enrolls non-traditional students that graduate in 6+ years, although almost 30 percent of them are employed in two or more positions. Additionally, students at KSU stop-out, but a large majority of them return.

The president advocates for the educationally nontraditional student, and promotes the unique mission KSU maintains in their quest to admit, enroll, and meet the students where they are. KSU has historically provided special attention, encouragement, and support to its student population and has a unique agenda in promoting postsecondary education to all students, with a special emphasis on those who may be academically or fiscally challenged. Approximately 81 percent of KSU students require developmental education; approximately 50 percent of those students return. KSU administrators noted that advising services are shared, as a collaborative initiative among advisors and students, which translates into building relationships with students.

In terms of student support, KSU has engaged in a variety of strategies. Most recently, an action plan was developed, an information center was initiated, various summits were hosted, a transportation initiative was developed, offices were relocated in closer proximity to other student-friendly locations, and survey results were shared with the campus community.

The president noted that KSU has experienced a significant increase the number of first-time freshmen, from 367 to 542, and continues to improve upon the number from the regional service area. She stated that a variety of new programs have also been added: MBA, Master of Computer Science. The undergraduate program in Nursing has been accredited. The new master's program in special education is now online and enrolled approximately 23 students for spring 2007.

In terms of fiscal support, KSU reported that 87 percent of African American students receive financial aid, compared to 73 percent Hispanic, 63 percent white, 33 percent American Indian, and 27 percent Asian. Administrators stated that greater emphasis will be placed on need-based awards, as well as tuition incentives. A total of 1,859 students received aid in fall 2005.

Administrators indicated that KSU experienced a decrease in the number of degrees awarded from previous years. A total of 280 degrees were awarded in 2005-06: 51 associate's degrees, 198 bachelor's degrees, and 31 master's degrees. In comparison to the previous year, 2004-05, a total of 331 degrees were awarded: 50 associate's degrees, 229 bachelor's degrees, and 52 master's degrees. In 2003-04, a total of 322 degrees were awarded: 66 associate's degrees, 214 bachelor's degrees, and 42 master's degrees. The university noted that stricter policies regarding past due accounts, or lack of funding on the part of students contributes to this issue. The university indicated that it is looking at a degree completer program to help address the concern, but the program will not be in place until fall 2007.

There were some KSU faculty and staff who suggested that the university might cure concerns regarding enrollment, retention, and graduation by being more selective. The

president indicated that she is disappointed that the most innovative strategy to increase performance is to “recruit better students.” She strongly believes that KSU offers students a unique educational experience that enhances their academic and civic development through the following:

- The campus culture
- Sense of inclusiveness: KSU is a family
- Strong sense of institutional mission
- Strong sense of belonging

Generally, the university has made consistent and continuous progress toward implementing the objectives of the Kentucky Plan, obtaining automatic status on the annual assessment of progress, since 2002. KSU made progress on seven of seven plan objectives for three consecutive years, 2005, 2006 and 2007.

Enrollment rates for Kentucky resident African Americans oscillated between 2000 and 2004. Overall, KSU has made steady progress in the number of African American students entering postsecondary education as reflected in the evaluation of continuous progress per the Kentucky Plan.

Retention rates for first year African American residents decreased between 2000 and 2002, before increasing in both 2003 and 2004. In summary, although the percent decreased over a three-year period, the number of African Americans retained, reflected continuous progress as evaluated per the Kentucky Plan. The pattern of retention for first-year African American students was similar to that of whites from 2000 through 2004. The retention rates for all undergraduate African Americans fluctuated from 2000 to 2002 before decreasing for two consecutive years, 2003-04 and 2004-05. Similarly, the six-year graduation rates for African Americans also vacillated between 2000 and 2004, ranging from 31.3 percent in 2000-01 to 27.1 percent in 2004-05.

Recognizing the special relationships historically black institutions have with students, some faculty and staff reported that they provide counseling and support for a significant number of students who have personal concerns as compared to those with academic concerns. Like most historically black institutions, Kentucky State University faces challenges with student recruitment and enrollment and should examine their recruitment and retention strategies more closely to insure their effectiveness.

The director of athletics stated that KSU is creative in recruiting students to campus. For example, when athletic teams travel to competitions at other institutions, the admission staff traveled with them, provided information regarding admission, and solicited applications. When coaches visited high schools outside the normal recruiting areas for

admissions staff, the coaches volunteered to share information regarding the academic community, the support systems, and the areas of study/disciplines offered.

The data show a pattern among the African American faculty of increases and decreases almost annually (2000-2004), while professional staff showed a constant upward trajectory over the same period.

The percentage of African American executives, administrators, and managers at KSU rose slightly between 2000 and 2002 before declining in 2003. The percentage increased in 2004. The level of diversity was further enhanced when the university recently appointed an interim provost and vice president of academic affairs. KSU officials reported that the president has a strong commitment to the *1997 Kentucky Postsecondary Education Improvement Act* (House Bill 1).

Overall, evidence presented by the university supports a conclusion that, since the 2000 campus visit, KSU is experiencing a moderate degree of progress. There continues to be challenges in some areas. For example, there appears to be a limited number of initiatives and programs to attract majority as well as other ethnic minority students; and retention programs and initiatives for both students as well as faculty members do not appear to be synchronized.

The focus group discussions and the general presentations acknowledge a general feeling that the level of performance by KSU is on a level path. Comments indicated that some areas, if strengthened, will yield greater levels of diversity and satisfaction among students, administrators, faculty, and staff.

Recommendations from the CEO

General

1. Rather than ignoring the perceptions of the public, students, faculty, and staff regarding the image of the campus, they should be embraced and efforts should be put in place to promote the institution and diversity through campus programs.
2. The university academic community should develop stronger relationships within the larger Frankfort community where partnerships are key to student recruitment, support for university programs and activities, and promoting the positive reputation of the university. The academic affairs leadership was identified by focus groups as the appropriate administrative unit to lead the conversation with community stakeholders to overcome perceived negative images/stereotypes and encourage more students to enroll at the university.
3. The university should confirm agreements with UK, UofL, and NKU regarding access to professional schools by KSU graduates and more prominently market those opportunities when recruiting. Focus group participants noted that concerns remain regarding efforts to market the quality of the students, as well as special access for professional school admission. A stronger effort should be made by the university to create more opportunity through implementation of these goals. (The university indicated that meetings were held with UK and UofL to reaffirm their commitment to the programs.)
4. The university should expand its first-year programs (Summer Bridge Program) to assist students to adjust to the rigors of college life and provide additional guidance for programs that support the professional development of faculty and staff.
5. The university should further strengthen and coordinate more closely strategies to increase retention and graduation rates of both majority and minority students. Degree production is a high priority for postsecondary education institutions. KSU should consider conducting a desk audit of its advising policies and procedures and use the results to develop guidelines that are consistent across colleges and departments.
6. Customer service in the Department of Public Safety should be reviewed and improved. Students voiced strong concern about their treatment by staff in the department. Students stated that staff members exhibited non-professional behavior, and several students were allegedly presented with unjust parking citations, impoliteness, and a general lack of interest in providing assistance. Students did not indicate that they experienced harassment by local police in the Frankfort community. (The university noted that a peer review is planned.)

7. KSU should promote the Whitney Young Program and focus special attention on re-establishing the Governor's Minority Student College Preparation Program as well as establish a GEAR UP Program.

Student Issues

1. While the university had noted that some of the issues raised had been addressed, students suggested that the university increase the level of attention to accommodations, cleanliness, and upkeep in residence halls. It is suggested that a greater level of accountability of housing management is needed to insure that a proper living environment is provided to students.
2. Customer service in the Financial Aid Office should be reviewed and improved. Students indicated that the office has improved this semester; however, a higher level of professionalism is desired. Students stated that staff members exhibited unprofessional behavior, including bad attitude, rudeness, impoliteness, and a general lack of interest in providing assistance. The unavailability of office staff throughout the day interferes with the students' ability to access information essential to receive aid.
3. The university should review its procedures for unannounced inspections of student residences and clearly communicate them to students. Students complained that security officers invaded their privacy and conducted random room checks without providing understandable explanations.
4. The university should consider establishing a program that requires the campus safety office to regularly meet with students in the residential areas to foster a better relationship. Similar to other institutions, these programs can be useful to help students and safety officers to develop an understanding that security provides safety for students rather than just law enforcement. Also, the Department of Public Safety should provide mandatory interpersonal communication training for all staff.
5. Nontraditional students suggested that more attention should be given to addressing scheduling conflicts for labs and clinical requirements, particularly in circumstances where they work full-time; alternative schedules should be available. Several students stated that clinical hours for weekend nursing students are scheduled during the morning hours when students are employed in full-time off-campus positions.

Recruitment, Admissions, and Retention Initiatives

1. While the president and cabinet are continually reviewing and addressing these issues, the Committee believes the university should promote financial access for students; financial aid is critical to students that may fall within the gap of not qualifying for

federal grants/aid and are not awarded scholarships. The availability of funds should be made known to students by the Financial Aid Office.

2. The university should increase its presence and connectedness in the local community and provide targeted marketing materials that also are integrated into the general marketing program of the university. This would ensure that a consistent message regarding the institution is received by the public.
3. The university should identify scholarships to support students who transfer from community and technical colleges, align scholarship policies with time to graduation, and inform students regarding the time-limited availability of scholarships/aid.
4. The university should consider using detailed retention data by department and college to develop retention strategies and evaluate the value of a retention committee to focus exclusively on the retention of underrepresented minority groups at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.
5. The university should consider the value of linking several key programs/services (degree audit, faculty advising, and retention) to officially inform the student of their status toward fulfilling the requirements for graduation at the beginning of each academic year. A formal process of notifying students of their status should increase the retention and the graduation rate.
6. There is concern regarding the potential effectiveness of the recruitment plan, follow up procedures, as well as the communication plan proposed for recruitment and admissions. While presenters insisted that the plan of action would be effective, there was inconsistency of understanding among the units responsible for implementation. Additional clarity of the plan, understanding of unit roles and responsibilities, and expectations of collaboration among and between units is needed.

Communication

1. The university should identify relationship channels to more effectively develop recruitment activities, as well as establish a reliable link with the leadership in African American, Hispanic, and Caucasian communities. The relationships are critical to building the level of trust needed to consistently increase the applicant pool and enrollment of students at KSU.
2. KSU should promote consistency of messages between offices, departments, and colleges. Also, CEO members noted that none of the focus group discussions referenced the role, if any, of the postsecondary education Public Agenda in the strategies for recruitment, retention, or graduation initiatives.

3. The university should consider establishing a central location for faculty and staff to obtain information and provide input/suggestions regarding activities and programs that support career advancement.
4. The student recruitment and financial aid offices should collaborate, develop, and maintain a comprehensive plan to ensure that interested students receive appropriate information in an efficient manner. One stop shopping should be an option.
5. The university should clarify the role of the Whitney Young School of Honors and Liberal Studies. The CEO noted that the focus groups did not mention the program or how it is used to attract high performing students.

Advancement and Upward Mobility

1. The university should identify and inform faculty and staff of programs intended to assist with career advancement or terminal degree completion. KSU should disseminate materials that highlight the SREB Doctoral Scholars Program and encourage junior faculty or staff to participate in the programs.
2. KSU should review strategies currently in place to ensure that policies that promote and result in the desired outcome are available to faculty and staff. Discussions among the focus group members did not indicate the existence of a formal plan for career development or advancement.

Recommendations or Concerns to the CEO

1. The CEO should encourage KSU, UK, UofL, and NKU to further solidify opportunities for collaboration, particularly increased opportunities for graduate and professional programs, allowing KSU graduates, as described in the original higher education desegregation plan, to qualify and enroll in professional programs.
2. The CEO should encourage KCTCS to more actively discuss potential opportunities and partnerships with KSU to support enrollment of their associate degree completers in the baccalaureate programs at KSU.
3. The CEO should review/modify its campus visit format to clearly inform institutions of the subject matter to be discussed and who should be invited to focus group sessions, to encourage institutions to invite participants from prior visits to participate, and to allow more time for the student and faculty/staff sessions.

Discussions with Constituent and Focus Groups

President and Leadership Team: The highest priority of *The Kentucky Plan for Equal Opportunities* and the Partnership Agreement with the U. S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, is to create campus and community environments that are inviting and supportive of diverse student, faculty, and staff populations. Dr. Kimberly Holmes, Interim Associate Director of Land Grant Programs, presented opening comments that highlighted strategies and initiatives to achieve the objectives and commitments outlined in *The Kentucky Plan* and the Partnership Agreement. Dr. Roosevelt Shelton, Interim Assistant Provost in the Office of Enrollment Management, discussed admissions, recruiting, and student enrollment; Dr. Robin Geiger, Director of Institutional Research and Effectiveness, provided information on student success (retention and graduation); Dr. Titilayo Ufomata, Associate Provost for Academic Affairs, discussed student advising services, campus environment, and the Graduate School; and Mr. Phil Gniot, Director of Human Resources, discussed faculty and staff recruitment and the Southern Regional Education Board as a resource for recruitment. President Mary Evans-Sias concluded the presentation with a summary overview.

KSU's undergraduate enrollment objective for Kentucky resident African Americans is 37.6 percent. From 2001 to 2005 the institution exceeded its goal and noted a 3.0 percent increase over the previous year in 2002 and a 9.57 percent increase in 2004 compared to 2003. The first year retention goal of 52.2 percent was met each year between 2002 and 2005. KSU showed an increase of 31.7 percent in 2003 compared to 2002, and an increase of 35.2 percent in 2004 over the previous year. The retention goal for all undergraduate students is 66.1 percent. From 2001 to 2005 KSU exceeded its objective, although increases were not noted from 2001 to 2003 and a slight increase of 2.2 percent was noted in 2004.

The six-year graduation rate objective is 25.4 percent. KSU met or exceeded the objective three of five times between 2001 and 2005. Graduation status is reported at the end of the sixth year after initial enrollment. KSU's six-year graduation rate objective is 25.4 percent; between 2001 and 2005, KSU met or exceeded the objective three of the five times. A total of 13 of 61 KY resident African American students graduated in fall 2001-02, a decrease of 72.3 percent from the prior year when 47 of 150 students graduated in fall 2000-01. In 2002-03, KSU noted an increase of 107.6 percent when 27 of 86 students graduated six years later; and, in 2003-04, an increase of 11.1 percent was shown when 30 of 138 students completed their educational goals. And, finally, in 2004-05, KSU experienced a decrease of 23.3 percent when 23 of 85 students graduated in six years.

The university made steady progress in its employment objectives, surpassing the plan objectives for executives/administrators/managers, as well as professional staff. African

Americans in executive/administrative/managerial positions are 62.9 percent. KSU noted an increase compared to previous years, in 2000 and 2002; however, a decline was also noted, in comparison to previous years, in 2001 and 2003. The objective for employment of African Americans as professionals is 53.0 percent. KSU saw an increase in 2000 and 2001 of 30.9 and 33.3 percent, respectively, when compared to previous years. A decrease was noted in 2003 of 17.7 percent and 20.3 percent when compared to the previous year. The objective for the employment of African Americans as faculty is 40.0 percent. KSU met or surpassed the objective four of five times between 2001 and 2005. In 2001, the university noted a 29.7 percent decline, compared to the previous year, but noted a 17.8 percent increase in 2002 and a 5.7 percent increase in 2003. The university made continuous progress on a majority of the objectives evaluated.

Student Body Representatives: More than 50 students participated in the focus group. Members of the CEO noted that this was the greatest rate of participation among the universities visited in recent years (compared to student focus group sessions at other institutions). Students expressed a great sense of pride for the university stating that, although there are problems at the university, they enjoy and appreciate the encouragement and rich cultural experience the institution offers. Students noted that the support provided by faculty is greatly appreciated and encouraging, from both majority and minority faculty members. They also stated that the atmosphere and environment at KSU offers a positive and unique educational experience. Several students provided examples of the educational experience and discussed mentoring opportunities that help students build external relationships.

During the discussion students also discussed a number of concerns, They noted that problems reported to housing and maintenance were slow to be addressed –some concerns reported some time ago are yet to be resolved. Further discussion in this area indicated that students believed that some of their concerns (not yet addressed) may impact their personal health. Students stated that Dr. Sias arranged a tour of the residence halls, suggested monthly meetings to discuss student concerns, and instructed housing staff to attend to the students concerns. Students would like follow-up.

Students noted improvements in the services provided by the Financial Aid Office compared to prior times, but believe that a higher level of professionalism is needed. They asserted that student concerns were not always addressed in a timely manner, staff members were unavailable to offer timely assistance, and all sources of aid are not easily identified. The availability (hours) of computer labs and usage fees were also a concern highlighted in the focus groups. Students commented that while there are computers in the residence halls, few of the stations are actually functional and there are few printers at these locations. Several students explained that they are charged a fee to print from computers in the library and are uncertain what the computer usage fee covers when they

pay tuition. They also stated that a number of other fees are charged with tuition, but they are unable to understand what the fees entitle them to receive.

In terms of support systems, the student group identified the Student Government Association as being very effective and the SGA as adequate; however, they were unsure of the effectiveness of the suggestion boxes that have been installed. While the focus group was complimentary of the improvements in the area of food service, they believe that student life remains stagnant. Students asked for more frequent town hall meetings to keep them informed and to help track resolution of concerns. In terms of academic support, focus group participants overwhelmingly acknowledged that the professors "take care of their students"; however, some departmental secretaries obstruct access to advisors. As at all institutions, students said that some professors do not maintain their regular office hours. The cost of tuition was also a major topic of discussion. They suggested that KSU locate additional funds to assist students to pay the gap between the current tuition and the anticipated tuition increase.

One student noted concerns with the evening nursing program, stating that clinical courses are offered in the morning, which becomes problematic for nontraditional students who are employed full time and attending night courses. Clinical experiences at alternative times of the day should be available. Students also expressed concern about the grading scale used by the nursing program as compared to the general curriculum. A graduating senior explained that capital improvements to instructional facilities are having a negative impact on access (time classes offered) to classes required for graduation. Additionally, the student stated that many of them have families and full-time jobs that intensify the impact on their ability to access the required classes. They thought the institution should consider alternative scheduling when major facilities are closed for repair or renovation. Most students said that they learned of the changes during pre-registration.

Various students made comments regarding campus policing and the role of the Department of Public Safety. Comments ranging from alleged retaliation against students for lodging complaints, excessive issuance of parking citations, harassment by certain officers, and lack of fair treatment (faculty/staff allowed to park in student parking areas and take available parking, but if students park in faculty/staff areas they receive citations or their vehicle is towed). Students suggested that the public safety staff be encouraged to participate in communication training. Students stated that the officers are often disrespectful, and the night security has stipulations regarding what they will or will not do.

Another less clearly articulated concern was raised by students involving random room checks conducted between 3 am and 5:30 am. They expressed concern that a full explanation as to why and under what authority these random checks occurred was not given, or not clearly understood by the students. Additionally, the students expressed

concerns regarding not having a clear understanding of who within the administration is responsible for approving the actions and ensure students safety during their implementation. They believe male officers (unaccompanied by a female officer) were allowed to inspect the rooms in the female residence halls.

The focus group concluded their comments by again complimenting the institution for its proactive environment. All focus group participants indicated that they would recommend KSU to their friends. Several stated that they have a great affection for KSU, its history, and the nurturing environment of the campus.

Recruitment, Admission, and Retention: The focus group session with the Office of Admissions, Recruitment, and Retention included 17 attendees. It was noted that the responsibilities of this group include providing students with accurate information to assist them in determining whether KSU will provide the type of environment that will enable them to successfully meet their educational and career goals, promoting financial access for students, assisting students with financial aid and work study programs, and occasionally reminding students of deadlines.

KSU administrators indicated that they are taking an aggressive approach in recruiting all students, indicating that the ACT allows them to learn where test takers are located and make immediate contact. The plan calls on recruiters to focus on the following counties and cities:

- Louisville /Jefferson County
- Lexington/Fayette County
- Hopkinsville/Christian County
- Bowling Green/Warren County
- Paducah/McCracken County
- Owensboro/Davies County
- Franklin County and contiguous counties

According to the university, student follow-up is primarily done by telephone calls and e-mail. A great deal of information is placed on the university Web site and is accessible to the general public. When appropriate, the university deploys buses to various high schools and arranges for students to visit the KSU campus. Administrators identified and explained the student recruitment and admission communication plan. After being admitted a student receives a post card from the SGA and Miss KSU, a financial aid packet, notification that their correspondence was received by the appropriate offices at the university, and other assistance. The process, according to KSU, takes place within approximately seven days of a student being admitted to the university.

For special events, recruiters travel with institutional organizations, for example the concert choir, to meet with students and provide information regarding application and admission to KSU. Administrators noted that recruiters are expected to study and familiarize themselves with the recruitment plan and required training before going out to recruit. Focus group participants identified collaborative opportunities with students enrolled at Bluegrass Community and Technical College, but also noted that access to additional technology to support the unit would be helpful. Also, the unit noted that the new transfer scholarships will prove a useful resource to encourage the potential pipeline of students at the community and technical colleges to come to KSU. In 2005, a total of 44 students received funding, in comparison to 54 students in 2006. It was emphasized that the university targets all students, those that meet the qualifications as well as those that are academically challenged. The university's decision process for admission includes review of GPA, ACT score, and leadership/community service. Additionally, KSU utilizes the following resources to recruit:

- Alumni
- Interface with teachers
- Recruitment materials
- E-mail, phone, teleconferencing
- Word of mouth

The general consensus among the CEO was that more collaboration and strategic planning is needed between the Financial Aid Office and the recruitment office to support the recruitment and admission of students. The chair of the CEO suggested that KSU promote the Whitney Young Program, and special attention should be focused on reestablishing the GMSCPP as well as the GEAR UP Program at KSU.

KSU administrators noted that a Student Retention Task Force was established and included representatives of the Registrar's Office, Financial Aid Office, deans, and students. Members of the CEO requested a copy of the Task Force Report.

Master's Program, Research, and Other Programs: Kentucky State University offers a limited number of graduate and research programs; however, several of the programs have nationwide appeal, for example, the Aquaculture Program (the institution's program of distinction), and the Public Administration Program. There were eight participants in this focus group; one participant was a student in the master's program. The student noted challenges associated with the registration process.

A researcher/faculty member indicated that developing an online master's degree level course offered during the spring semester was challenging, but enrollment in the course has exceeded expectations. A total of 24 students enrolled in spring 2007. KSU is the

first HBCU to offer an online Special Education Program, and the university anticipates increased interest. A total of 10 applications have been submitted for the fall semester. KSU has not yet advertised the special education program. CEO members suggested that KSU collaborate with the Kentucky Department of Education to market and promote the new program. Administrators said that staffing for the new program is problematic with only one faculty member with a specialty in this area. Administrators stated that they were fortunate to receive funding through the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority and the Kentucky Department of Education to support the online Master's of Special Education program.

The master's student stated that she would like to have a meaningful opportunity to engage in hands-on experience and work in the community. She believes that "service learning" is currently missing from the curriculum in her program of study. She explained that it would be beneficial, not simply for the student, but also for the faculty members, the university, and the larger Frankfort community. She concluded that the process must be systematic and purposeful.

Administrators stated that the public administration program has been limited in its recruitment of students and more resources are needed. Faculty members were very complimentary of students that complete their programs. Many have transitioned from the master's programs to enroll in medical school, as well as doctoral programs.

Aquaculture program staff and researchers suggested that KSU identify promising students earlier to nurture them through the educational system; a program to collaborate more closely with the elementary, middle, and high schools would be helpful. Also, more targeted marketing and advertising to create an awareness of the program would be most helpful. In terms of recruitment, the College of Aquaculture has a K-12 educator that travels to schools around the state to promote the program. Additionally, the mobile unit is dispatched to various locations and an undergraduate scholarship was developed to encourage and introduce minority students to the program. Nationally, 10 percent of the participants in aquaculture are female, while only 1 percent is a minority.

The College of Math, Science, Technology, and Health collaborates with Jefferson Community and Technical College to build institutional relationships and create/implement a faculty exchange program specifically for minority students. Also, the program is working with the biomedical science program at the University of Louisville.

Pre-Professional programs (Law, Medicine, Dentistry, Engineering, etc.): Because of scheduling conflicts, no students attended this focus group session. The focus group session included five members of the faculty, including pre-professional programs, pre-health programs, STEM programs, pre-engineering, pre-law, and computer science.

The faculty representatives expressed concern regarding financial aid/scholarship support for students in these areas. They noted that a very competitive market exists for the better prepared students and that the availability of scholarships will help KSU compete with the more prominent institutions for good students. Presently, the upper 15 percent of the KSU graduating pre-law class attend law school (3-5 students each year). The university typically interfaces with a student regarding pre-law opportunities after the student expresses interest in law school. The special relationship with Chase, Brandeis, and UK Law schools is not marketed. The KSU special relationship is impacted by the limitation on class size at each law school.

The pre-health profession program has enjoyed good success. However, UK has suspended its participation with KSU, and UofL continues the relationship with approximately 100 students benefiting over the life of the program. The faculty could not explain why UK discontinued the special relationship; i.e. student performance, lack of interest, or some other issue. They said that no clear explanation had been offered by the UK administrators. The group would like to see the relationship rebuilt. It was noted that some KSU students currently participate in summer programs at UK and UofL.

In the STEM area KSU collaborates with UK and UofL under a three plus two year study program in engineering. The students complete three years of study at KSU and then transfer to UK or UofL to complete two years of study to receive a degree. The degree of success among the students in the program varies, but overtime they have been successful. One disconnect between the programs at KSU and those at UK and UofL is that the doctoral programs are expecting ethnic minority students to be produced by KSU to take advantage of the special relationship programs, and KSU (a historically black institution) is expected to attract Caucasian students to diversify their student body and programs. KSU has no latitude to dissuade Caucasian students from taking advantage of the opportunity offered by the special program relationships. This lack of confluence of interest affects the KSU programs and the research institution programs and needs to have more discussion. The group also noted that a lack of current technology (computing and other technology) creates a difficulty when attempting to attract competitive students and provide instruction for them that properly prepares them for the global economy and labor market. In conclusion, the group noted that even at KSU the participation of African Americans is limited and they acknowledge that the number of African American students who excel in math and science is a challenge. Also, the very limited number of African American faculty in these programs may contribute more significantly to the flat or declining enrollment.

Academic Deans and Chairs: The focus group agreed that the deans, and department chairs are dedicated, and strongly committed to preparing students for graduate and professional school. The administrators discussed the honors core program and mused that the admission standards for the honors program are lower than other schools, which allow students with leadership potential (not yet demonstrated by GPA) to be part of an advanced educational environment and encouraged to be successful.

The Whitney Young Program designates a pre-law curriculum. The requirements for the program include a minimum ACT score of 21 and a 3.0 GPA. Students are encouraged to participate in national conferences. Currently, 60 students participate in the program, with 20-25 in the major. Approximately 20 students complete the major each year. Scholarships at KSU are not seen as being competitive with other institutions, i.e., some financial packages include no financial aid while others do. The packages without financial aid seem more attractive to students. However, students say that they appreciate the small class size and mentoring at KSU.

One focus group participant expressed concern that UK does not fully support the special programs/relationships that were in place to enhance minority participation in professional programs. The group agreed that UK and KSU should work to rebuild the relationship to transition KSU students into graduate and professional programs at UK. Another participant indicated that UK may not have confidence in the KSU students' ability to be successful and thus do not participate (based on past performance by KSU students). Also, there is a belief that some students use the system to gain an unfair advantage in pursuing admission to the professional programs by transferring and enrolling at KSU during their senior year.

Several deans and chair persons suggested arranging a meeting with administrators from the three institutions to discuss collaborative opportunities to successfully transition students into graduate and professional programs at their institutions. Additionally, they strongly believe that UK and UofL can help KSU produce a pipeline to allow KSU graduates to successfully complete medical, dental, and pharmacy school. They agreed that an opportunity exists but the institutions should be encouraged to develop a collaborative agreement for the benefit of students and the goals of postsecondary education.

Faculty and Professional Staff: The focus group included approximately 50 participants (African American, Caucasian, and other ethnic groups). The group believes that they provide a warm and welcoming atmosphere for minority students, a corroborating statement made by students in an earlier focus group session. A number of professional staff offered dialogue regarding the positive campus environment that KSU offers to students who appear to be marginalized. Many indicated that they believe that KSU is doing a good job, but they also acknowledged that there is room for improvement.

Some professional staff and faculty stated that some of what they do for students is incredibly important, often not publicized but effective. Many indicated that they often deal with trauma—not academic, but overwhelming personal issues. Many students transition to the university from at-risk environments. The primary approach by the university is encouragement-- “You can do it, we will help.”

The university has been recognized by the National Survey of Student Engagement for its student environment. Recently, NSSE compared KSU to three groups and determined that KSU met or exceeded the ratings of all three peer groups in a variety of areas. However, faculty and staff do not utilize the data to promote the university. They agree that the information should be integrated into the public information offered by the university to inform the public about its successes.

Some faculty noted that KSU, in some ways, is becoming more mainstream as new faculty and staff are added. The culture of caring and mentoring is giving way to personal and career advancement. In such an environment, the students will suffer and the university will lose its uniqueness among its sister institutions. How a potential student and her family perceive the attitude of faculty and professional staff is a critical consideration when decisions regarding where to pursue postsecondary education are made. The athletics program noted that KSU often is creative and takes advantage of opportunities to recruit students; for example, KSU administrators go to colleges when the basketball team travels, offer admission information, and collect applications while meeting with students at high schools located in close proximity to the institutions where sporting events are held.

A member of the professional staff noted that the level of staff support is a concern; for example, there are not enough staff members in the facilities area to handle some of the problems discussed by the students in the earlier session. Proper staffing should be a high priority for the university when addressing the needs of its clients (the students). The Department of Public Safety indicated that the university will review and update its policies to address concerns of the students. Also, it was noted that public safety is already slated to undergo a desk audit to help identify efficiencies and policy initiatives. Officers receive diversity training and often request supplementary funds to receive additional training. Basic training for all officers is provided through the Eastern Kentucky University Law Enforcement Training Program in Richmond, Kentucky.

Because of time limitations and the presence of executives, some faculty and professional staff chose not to speak during the focus group session. Several chose to provide written comments to CEO members or CPE staff while others offered verbal comments. Where appropriate the input of those individuals is included in the report.

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