



Eastern Kentucky University Regional Stewardship Program Strategic Plan

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Section I

Background and Executive Summary

Background

The Commonwealth of Kentucky's Regional Stewardship Program has provided Eastern Kentucky University with an opportunity to increase and refocus its already significant level of regional engagement. At ECU's fall, 2008 Convocation, President Doug Whitlock announced that regional stewardship was to become one of three focal points of ECU's new strategic plan (with the other two being student success and the university's quality enhancement programs—see <http://www.mpc.eku.edu/convocation/>). As President Whitlock announced at the Convocation, ECU's Regional Stewardship Program is being designed to coordinate the three elements of ECU's mission: teaching; scholarship; and service. Thus, through regional stewardship initiatives, service to the communities within ECU's 22-county service region will, whenever possible, be combined with applied faculty research and student research. The products of that service and research will be brought back to the classroom to provide students with authentic applied learning opportunities. In addition, many of ECU's regional stewardship programs will be designed to include service learning for its students so that ECU students become more engaged with service region communities.

Without having put a label on it, Eastern Kentucky University has long maintained a rich and proud tradition of providing service to the region of the Commonwealth of Kentucky in which it is located and from which it has drawn its student body. From initially becoming the first Normal school created in Kentucky and educating the majority of the teachers who would return to their southeastern Kentucky communities in order to teach the children living there, to most recently renewing its 1920s commitment to southeastern Kentucky's beekeeping communities through its Apiforestation project (see Section IV of ECU's Regional Grant Funds Proposal, attached as Appendix A), ECU has been and remains committed to its mission of regional stewardship in accordance with its declaration of being a 22-county campus. ECU has submitted its credentials as an "engaged institution" to the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Within its application for elective classification, ECU identified more than 450 ongoing partnership activities, the majority of which both were regional and of a stewardship nature.

The Commonwealth of Kentucky's Regional Stewardship Program has also enabled ECU to institutionalize and more fully coordinate its campuses-wide programs designed to reach out to, and improve the quality of life within, ECU's 22-county service region. ECU has completed

substantial compliance of its regional stewardship infrastructure plan by appointing its first Director of Regional Stewardship and establishing its Office of Regional Stewardship, which is being advised both by its Regional Advisory Committee and its Faculty Advisory Committee.¹

Progress on all of the above, EKU's progress in its institutional alignment in support of its regional stewardship initiatives and program (see Section III, Goal 5 below), as well as EKU's regional stewardship key indicators, will be tracked through the utilization of Digital Measures software, which has been purchased and will be implemented between the present date and fall 2009.

EKU is in the process of exploring the establishment of a "Collaboration Center" with Morehead State University and all of the 2- and 4-year postsecondary education institutions located within the 44-county combined service regions of EKU and Morehead State University. Based upon the similar demographics and community-articulated needs of this 44-county region, it is contemplated that the postsecondary institutions would utilize the Collaboration Center to partner in spearheading regional stewardship initiatives to address those common regional needs. Those initiatives may include: entrepreneurship training directed toward both high school student and adult populations; grassroots leadership training, including community projects to be initiated and completed within the training program period, directed toward both youth and adult populations; wellness education programs directed toward youth, adult and senior populations; and a community connectivity project designed to provide end users with access to broadband capacity existing within most communities.

Executive Summary

The spirit of Eastern Kentucky University's strategic plan for its Regional Stewardship Program is one of collaboration through forged informal (and, sometimes, formal) partnerships. These partnerships have been, and will continue to be formed between EKU groups (composed of faculty, staff, and students) and groups of community members, organizations, agencies and other postsecondary institutions located within EKU's 22-county service region. Via these partnerships, EKU's resources and community resources will be marshaled through programs that will be initiated to address *community-articulated* needs. These programs will be oriented toward community capacity building with two goals: that they will become self-sustaining through the efforts of community members who will have been trained for that purpose; and that they will specifically be targeted toward the unique needs of each community within the service region, recognizing that "one size" indeed does not fit all.

¹ The composition of EKU's Regional Stewardship Advisory Committee is set forth on Appendix B.

Eastern Kentucky University strongly believes that regional stewardship must be a community-driven, rather than a university-driven, initiative. In order to determine the *community-articulated* needs of its service region, ECU's strategic planning process for its Regional Stewardship Program started with an assessment of those needs. The methodology used to assess community needs, as well as the data culled from the community needs assessment, is described in Section II below.

Following completion of the community needs assessment process, in collaboration with the communities located within its service region, its Regional Stewardship Advisory Committee, its Regional Stewardship Faculty Advisory Committee and its Faculty and Staff Resource Council, Eastern Kentucky University established the following goals for its Regional Stewardship Program:

Goal 1: improve student performance within K-12 schools through the delivery, or coordination of the delivery, of educational services, based upon each individual school's distinct needs.

Goal 2: increase the value placed by community members on education, and community members' involvement with each community's K-12 schools.

Goal 3: deliver, or coordinate the delivery of, non-educational services (wherever possible) to school sites, based upon each individual community's needs.

Goal 4: engage the youth of our service region's communities in stewardship initiatives and their communities.

Goal 5: increase ECU faculty, staff and student engagement in regional stewardship initiatives.

Section II

Assessment of Regional Needs

For the purposes of this Strategic Plan, regional needs were assessed by quadrangulation utilizing four separate groups of sources: 1) fourteen “town meeting” type sessions conducted by Eastern Kentucky University’s president, Doug Whitlock, throughout EKU’s 22-county service region to gauge needs for programs and services; 2) analyses of 2007, 2008, and (where available) 2009 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy reports (which contained the results of needs assessments) filed by the four Area Development Districts, which include service area counties within EKU’s 22-county service region (Bluegrass Area Development District, Cumberland Valley Area Development District, Kentucky River Area Development District, and Lake Cumberland Area Development District; 3) input from the members of EKU’s Regional Stewardship Advisory Committee; and 4) five Community Needs Assessment Forums covering all 22 counties within EKU’s service region (the first conducted in Somerset, KY for community members of Laurel, McCreary, Pulaski and Wayne counties; the second conducted in Stanford, KY for the community members of Boyle, Casey, Garrard, Lincoln and Rockcastle counties; the third conducted in Hazard, KY for the community members of Harlan, Leslie and Perry counties; the fourth conducted in Irvine, KY for the community members of Estill, Jackson, Lee, Madison, Owsley and Powell counties; and the fifth conducted in Pineville, KY for the community members of Bell, Clay, Knox and Whitley counties).

The regional needs fall into five categories and are summarized as follows:²

1. School and Community Health, Wellness and Safety.
 - Create equal and greater access to health related services
 - Develop and promote programs addressing healthier lifestyles
 - Develop program to obtain maximum use of school/ church indoor recreational facilities
 - Develop anti-smoking programs
 - Improve health education programs for all public school systems
 - Evils-of-drugs awareness programs
 - Evils-of-smoking awareness programs
 - Increase emphasis on preventive health maintenance activities

² Only categories within the purview of the Kentucky Regional Stewardship Program have been included here.

- Assist in the development of medical surveys for clusters of cancers, diabetes and cardiac related diseases to determine patterns of diseases
 - Expand and improve educational, early diagnostic and preventive health care programs
 - Promote education on good nutrition
 - Increase levels of physical activity
 - Encourage development of community centers that promote health, fitness and quality of life improvements
 - Promote reduction of heart disease (deaths due to significantly higher than state average)
 - Promote programs dealing with the health needs of a demographically-aging population (in the Aging Services area, the need for services is usually three times greater than the services that are actually provided)
 - Provide an array of community based services for elders in order to prevent institutionalizing them
 - Support substance abuse prevention and recovery programs
 - Promote the continued improvement and development of emergency services
 - Expand programs to eliminate spouse and child abuse
 - Enhance the safety of the citizens of the area
 - Provide healthcare at schools
 - Eliminate “turfism” in the provision of healthcare services
- Create new cultural awareness of “wellness”

2. Education.

- Create equal and greater access to educational opportunities
 - Pursue a program to improve school attendance throughout the county school systems
 - Strengthen child and adult literacy programs
 - Bridge education gap through remediation at elementary, middle and high school levels
 - Promote new methods/ideas for improving middle school age children’s education attainment for greater success in secondary education
 - Increase high school graduation rates
 - Enhance procedures for greater involvement of parents within dropout prevention program
 - Provide more training opportunities for students who wish to obtain a skill rather than continue their education in a post-secondary institution
 - Provide apprenticeship programs
 - Provide early childhood training and development
 - Provide educational opportunities for area adults

- Improve health education programs for all public school systems
- Increase postsecondary education programs through satellite opportunities
- Develop a regional educational program on the importance of the environment to make young people more aware of the critical nature of this issue
- Develop evils-of-drugs and tobacco awareness education programs
- Develop nutrition education programs
- Develop a regional educational program on solid waste emphasizing the cost of uncontrolled littering and illegal dumping
- Present postsecondary education as opportunities for our youth
 - Promote message of tie between degree attainment and increased income
- Steer our kids in the right direction
 - Increase the expectations of both students and their parents
- Increase dual credit offerings
- Tie P-16 education to economic development
- Have EKV tap into local, community resources
 - Increase the roles of P-16 councils
- Create community awareness of local, community resources
- Increase community, including parental, involvement with schools
- Provide services to autistic children and those with other special needs
- Facilitate civic engagement among students through partnerships
- Create greater utilization of area high school facilities
- Eliminate needs for remediation at postsecondary level
- Create perception of value of education through increased involvement of community
- Increase career and personal counseling
- Create seamlessness among three P-12 levels
- Postsecondary institutions meeting needs on non-traditional students
- Teach entrepreneurship in the schools
- Improve continuing education training for teachers
- Improve quality of school boards through grassroots leadership development
- Create more vocational training opportunities

3. Economic, including Workforce, Development.

- Escalate and improve upon efforts to fully develop potential agribusiness
- Promote development of an educated, well-trained workforce
 - Provide employment opportunities for the dislocated worker, with proper training of new skills needed for a diversified economy
 - Develop employability skills training on how to get and keep a job

- Ensure that 95% of graduating seniors take the Workkeys Test, with a goal of 70% obtaining the Kentucky Employment Certificate by the year 2011
- Provide targeted training to meet employer needs
- Establish a true paradigm whereby employer needs truly drive workforce development
- Provide administrative workforce development assistance to local government bodies
 - Determine the most significant management/ educational needs of local government officials and personnel
 - Train local officials in financial management, personnel administration and general management
 - Promote and encourage leadership training for all major elected officials
 - Train local officials in computer literacy and applications
 - Provide and attend relevant educational workshop seminars to enhance the capacity of the Area Development District Public Administration Specialist to perform a full range of management assistance functions
- Create a healthier workforce
 - Improve overall workforce health
 - Support substance abuse prevention and recovery programs to promote retention of workforce
- Create atmosphere that promotes local, homegrown businesses
 - Eliminate lack of entrepreneurs
 - Teach entrepreneurship in the schools
 - Create support for local businesses
 - Provide entrepreneurship development
 - Encourage cooperation and coordination between economic and community development groups and individuals to facilitate development and expansion of area businesses, communities, and business infrastructure
 - Attract capital for entrepreneurial development
- Create broadband connectivity
- Create Chambers of Commerce
- Create more vocational and technical training opportunities
- Improve industrial base with higher-wage employment opportunities

4. Environment.

- Improve land use practices to better control erosion from areas of strip mining, agriculture, cut over forest lands, road and highway construction and prevent pollution and sedimentation of our rivers and lakes
 - Encourage improved post mine usage and to find better ways of utilizing post mined land
- Improve planning (reduce sprawl occurring in a relatively haphazard manner)
- Develop “green” initiatives (i.e. recycling; elimination of illegal dumps)

5. Better Government.

- Promote civic engagement
 - Provide training on civic responsibilities to out-of-school adults through the media, civic organizations, chambers of commerce, social educational and religious groups
- Improve coordination of area organizations and governments
 - Develop more programs on a coordinated, regional basis (with less “turfism”)
 - Enhance leadership
- Fulfill need for a regional comprehensive catalog of human resources services
- Enhance improvements to the current system of social services and community facilities
 - Provide more youth community centers and activities
 - Improve health education programs for all public school systems
 - Expand programs to eliminate spouse and child abuse
 - Support and, where possible, expand the current Area Aging Services Program
 - In the Aging Services area, the need for services is usually three times greater than the services that are actually provided
 - Provide an array of community based services for elders in order to prevent institutionalizing them
 - With nursing homes being full, prevention is the key to a better lifestyle for the elderly (60+) population; problems can be thwarted through more preventive measures such as proper diet and early diagnosis of illness

Section III

The Goals of Eastern Kentucky University's Regional Stewardship Program

Goal 1: improve student performance within K-12 schools through the delivery, or coordination of the delivery, of educational services, based upon each individual school's distinct needs.

Achievement of this goal would result (among other things) in the following positive education outcomes for Eastern Kentucky University's service region:

- increased attendance rates;
- increased retention rates;
- improved literacy;
- improved STEM performance;
- improved performance on other assessments;
- a decrease in high school dropout rates;
- an increase in high school graduation rates;
- an increase in applications to 2- and 4-year postsecondary institutions; and
- a decrease in remediation needed by students upon entering 2- and 4-year postsecondary institutions.

Attainment of this goal would be effected through implementation of expansion of ECU's pilot Education Extension Agent Program (for a full description of this program, including alignment with community-articulated needs and metrics of success, see Sections II, III and IV of ECU's Regional Grant Funds Proposal, attached as Appendix A). As a member of the sub-region in which he or she was working, each Education Extension Agent would: a) be a respected and trusted member of the community; b) have a working familiarity with the local school district(s), its distinct needs, and its administrative personnel; and c) be familiar with fellow community members and locally available resources at his or her disposal.

Goal 2: increase the value placed by community members on education, and community members' involvement with each community's K-12 schools.

Achievement of this goal would result in the positive education outcomes described for Goal 1 above.

Attainment of this goal would be effected through: a) engagement of community members by each Education Extension Agent; and b) coordination of delivery of community services (wherever possible) at school sites by each Education Extension Agent (for a full description of these programs, including alignment with community-articulated needs and metrics of success, see Sections II and IV of ECU's Regional Grant Funds Proposal, attached as Appendix A).

Goal 3: deliver, or coordinate the delivery of, non-educational services (wherever possible) to school sites based upon each individual community's needs.

Achievement of this goal would result in: a) an enhanced likelihood of attaining the positive education outcomes described for Goals 1 and 2 above by breaking down barriers between members of the community accessing the non-educational services and the community's schools; and b) delivery to the community of tailored services (created through formal or informal partnerships with the community) articulated by the community as being needed.

Attainment of this goal would be effected through a) implementation of expansion of ECU's pilot Education Extension Agent Program (for a full description of this program, including alignment with community-articulated needs and metrics of success, see Sections II, III and IV of ECU's Regional Grant Funds Proposal, attached as Appendix A); and b) coordination of delivery of community services (wherever possible) at school sites by each Education Extension Agent (for a full description of these programs, including alignment with community-articulated needs and metrics of success, see Sections II and IV of ECU's Regional Grant Funds Proposal, attached as Appendix A).

Goal 4: engage the youth of our service region's communities in stewardship initiatives and their communities.

Achievement of this goal would result in: a) an enhanced likelihood of attaining the positive education outcomes described for Goals 1 and 2 above; and b) an increase in each community's involvement in self-sustaining capacity building as these youth become the next generation's community leaders.

Attainment of this goal would be effected through: a) an increase in civic engagement activities and service learning courses for youth, facilitated by the Education Extension Agent; b) (if the

proposed Collaboration Center programs are undertaken) grassroots leadership training, including community projects to be initiated and completed within the training program period, directed toward the youth population in each community; and c) EKU's Office of Regional Stewardship promotion of a "Connect-the-Dots" Coloring Book contest for elementary school students (winning entries will be showcased in Kentucky Youth Associates' KIDS COUNT County Data Book) and essay contests for middle and high school students, located in EKU's service region, for the dual purposes of introducing the students to the concept of regional stewardship and promoting civic engagement.³

Goal 5: increase EKU faculty, staff and student engagement in regional stewardship initiatives.

Achievement of this goal would facilitate Attainment of Goals 1, 2, 3, and 4 above.

Attainment of this goal will be effected through institutional alignment of the university, colleges, department or academic units, and faculty and staff to support public engagement by emphasizing the importance of regional stewardship in its:

- mission, vision, and values;
- organizational structure;
- leadership selection, evaluation, and development;
- institutional planning;
- internal policies and procedures;
- funding for public engagement;
- facilities and environment;
- faculty recruitment, selection, orientation, and professional development;
- individual incentives and rewards;
- unit level incentives and rewards;
- communications, rituals, awards, and ceremonies;
- information and reporting systems;
- evaluation and accountability; and
- curriculum and student educational activities (including student research, and courses incorporating service learning).

1. ³ Essay contest questions: 1) for middle school students: "How can I become a steward within my community?"; and 2) for high school students: "How, by concentrating on more than one strand of Regional Stewardship (economic, including workforce, development; education; the environment; collaborative government; and health, wellness, and safety), can we increase the effects of stewardship within my community?"

