

Qualitative Analysis
NCA Self-Study Focus Groups
June 16, 2004

Introduction

As part of the University's self-study process for the Higher Learning Commission, the NCA Steering Committee convened a series of focus groups in Spring 2004 that discussed two key concepts: KU as a distinctive institution, and KU as a future-oriented institution. These are two of the themes of the committee's "self-reflection," and were discussed at length with the groups listed below. Composition of the groups varied considerably; one group was all students, one all administrators, one all staff, and others were a mixture of these categories (plus faculty).

Meetings were budgeted 2 hours, but generally lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. Focus group size ranged from as small as a dozen to as large as 40 or more. Attending the meetings to facilitate and listen to the conversation were Barbara Romzek, chair of the NCA Steering Committee, Sandra Gautt, Robin Lehman, and Deb Teeter.

Data being analyzed as a result of these focus groups consists of the notes taken by committee members in attendance. One set of notes is available in one case; in all others at least two sets of notes are available, so that information and impressions can be corroborated (and also serve as a source of triangulation). The striking similarities in the sets of notes for each group provides some assurance that the impressions of the committee members in attendance are a fairly accurate account of the sentiments expressed during the focus groups, and also assuring the reliability of the data. So while transcripts are not available, these notes provide sufficient data to represent the opinions expressed during the focus group sessions.

Group composition was as follows:

- February 10 Research Directors, Lawrence campus
- February 11 Academic Deans, Lawrence campus
- February 25 KUMC Leaders
- February 26 NCA Steering Committee (administrators, faculty, staff, students)
- April 1 Classified and Unclassified governance representatives, Lawrence campus
- April 8 University Council, Lawrence campus (leadership of Faculty Senate)
- April 9 Chancellor's Policy Group (central administration)
- May 5 Students, Lawrence campus

Findings

The participants of the focus groups were asked to consider two topics: the distinctiveness of KU, and challenges that KU will face in the future. Interestingly, their responses on both of these seemingly unrelated questions fell into the same three categories: The place, the people and the learning environment. Participants considered KU to be a distinctive place—both physically and in its sense of community. They also considered the people at KU to be a distinctive feature, given the caliber of faculty, staff, and students that the institution attracts. And finally, they considered the learning environment at KU to be distinctive for a variety of reasons, including its strong international focus and its effective relationship between research and teaching.

Challenges perceived by the participants also fall into these same three broad categories.

Participants see the maintenance of KU's distinctive sense of place as a challenge for the future.

They also expressed concern that the institution needs to retain the distinctive people that make it so successful. Concern was also expressed that conscious effort will be needed to maintain the integrity of its distinctive learning environment.

Given the prevalence of these three categories in the participant's comments, they will become the structure for this report. A caveat here is needed: overlap clearly exists between the categories of people, place, and learning environment. Distinctive people are needed to create a distinctive learning environment, for example. And challenges to the institution's sense of place will as a matter of course also challenge its people. Every attempt will be made during the course of this report to avoid unnecessary redundancy, but the interrelated nature of the participants' comments will make some repetitiveness unavoidable.

Distinctive Aspects of KU

Distinctiveness of Place

- **Place is important at KU.**

When students graduate from KU, it is described as "walking down the hill." This famous walk starts on Jayhawk Boulevard, goes through the Campanile, down Mt. Oread, and into Memorial Stadium. When one graduate asks another if they participated in the ceremony, they traditionally ask "Did you walk the hill?" This is just one example of the importance of place in any discussion of KU's distinctiveness. Embedded in this custom is both the crucial nature of the physical place of KU and the value given to its many traditions, the "place" that is KU. KU is both a location and a set of activities, a set of values. As such, both types of place will be considered here.

- **KU is a physically beautiful campus.**

With a campus that is included with regularity on lists of “most beautiful college campuses,” it should be of no surprise that this characteristic was listed so frequently, and usually within the first few distinctive characteristics of the institution. Faculty, staff, and students alike are proud of the campus, its architecture and green spaces. Participants felt strongly tied not just to KU as an institution in some abstract sense, but to the KU main campus, its physical place.

- **KU is a well-located place.**

Participants in a number of focus groups commented on KU’s distinctive geographical location. The main campus is located in Lawrence, just the type of vibrant small city where one would want a state institution to be located. But rather than being isolated there, the main campus is 45 minutes away from the major metropolitan area of Kansas City, and 25 minutes away from the state capitol (and all the advantages that affords) in Topeka. Participants felt that KU benefited significantly from this combination of small-town location and large city proximity, as well as from having the state legislature just down the road.

- **KU has a tenuous place in the state of Kansas.**

KU’s “place” in the state can be thought of metaphorically as well as physically. Focus group participants often mentioned KU’s designation as the flagship institution of the state of Kansas. However, many participants were quick to note that it is the flagship in a state that does not particularly want a flagship. Kansas has a strong populist history (also mentioned by participants) that has long-reaching effects on the state’s relationship with its own institutions of higher education. Participants noted that, as a populist state, Kansas been uncomfortable with placing too much value on higher education, and with treating its various higher education institutions differently. Ironically, Kansas’s populist philosophies have created a situation where

KU's efforts to strive for excellence actually result in the institution being *less* popular with some Kansas constituents. For example, focus group participants commented on how KU's reputation is actually better nationally than statewide.

- **Commitment to diversity runs deep at KU.**

A number of focus group participants raised long-standing commitment to diversity as one of KU's distinct qualities. KU's first graduating class in 1873 had a woman as its valedictorian, and one focus group participant commented with pride on being able to look back at KU's photos from the 19th century and see black and female students included in the student body. Even a cursory glance at KU's history will show that it has long been a place committed to educating a diverse student body (perhaps a tribute to the populist ideologies discussed above). Participants commented that the current climate at KU is not just accepting of diversity and inclusiveness, but that the institution values it. Along with valuing diversity is a concomitant value placed upon the international flavor of KU. Participants across the focus groups mentioned the distinctiveness of KU as a place with a significant international population in the heart of the midwest. The student group was particularly impressed with KU's international perspective, commenting on the unusualness of being in Kansas, but being able to walk across campus and hear many languages spoken. Faculty and administrative participants commented on how colleagues at other institutions were surprised by the extent to which KU was a place with an international perspective.

- **KU is a collegial place.**

Nearly every focus group spoke to the level of collegiality at KU. Participants considered collegiality to be pervasive at the place that is KU—referring not just to academic collegiality (discussed further in the “Learning Environment” section), but to KU as a friendly place, a

welcoming community, a place that encourages equal participation amongst all groups in decision-making processes. “Inclusiveness” was a phrase used to describe KU, and participants thought it distinctive that the inclusivity extended across and between faculty, administrators, staff, and students. Further, a participant remarked that KU is a place that “nurtures” even the average student to exceed expectations.

- **KU is a place shaped by its traditions.**

The Jayhawk. The steam whistle. The basketball team. Wescoe Beach. The Rock Chalk chant. These are but a few of the traditions specifically named by participants when discussing KU’s distinctiveness. Clearly, participants considered these traditions as important factors that shape the place that is KU, both its internal image and how it is viewed by external constituents (one participant mentioned that the Jayhawk is the second most recognizable mascot in the nation). But perhaps what makes KU truly distinctive is that its traditions do not end with landmarks, mascots, and athletics, which are typical to so many institutions. Traditions at KU extend to its long-standing commitment to diversity, to an involved student body who tackles issues of social justice on a regular basis, to a faculty whose research and practice often address the needs of Kansas and Kansans (all mentioned by participants). It is this combination of traditions that gives KU its distinctive flavor as both a place with ties to the past and a forward-looking institution.

Distinctiveness of People

- **The staff and administrators are caring and involved.**

It is a testament to the institution that fully half of the focus groups described the central administration as “accessible,” including the group populated entirely by students.

Administrators were called “open,” willing to listen to the voices of many different groups. One focus group described the administrators as “aware” and “conscious of the contributions of staff.” It is a further testament that half of the groups, again including the students, described KU’s staff as caring and committed. In their focus group, the staff described themselves as “working for a special purpose in a special place,” which is why they believe the University is able to keep talented staff, even in years of tight budgets.

- **The faculty is talented, accessible, and involved in the institution.**

Participants described faculty at KU as—variously—humble, collegial, “world class” (by the student group), friendly, and overachieving. Participants believe that KU’s faculty has a national reputation for excellence, and that their reputation is growing. Loyalty of faculty to the institution was also mentioned by participants as a feature distinctive to KU, and again, the collegiality of the working environment was stressed as an important characteristic, both within departments and in interdisciplinary groups. Two focus groups mentioned that KU lacks a “star system,” whereby some high-performing faculty work by a separate set of expectations (and perhaps are rewarded separately as well), and another group noted the level of senior faculty involvement in undergraduate instruction. Nearly every focus group mentioned the high level of faculty-student interaction, and the great value that the institution places upon those relationships.

- **Students are involved, diverse, included.**

Faculty and staff spoke very highly of the student body at KU, praising them for their involvement in both the KU community and in Lawrence-area activities, for their commitment to learning, for their pride in the institution. Student government was mentioned repeatedly as a distinctive aspect of KU, as was the maturity of the decisions that student leaders have made in

recent years. (Examples include the steps involved to raise student fees for the construction of a new daycare facility and a new recreation center, and their inclusion in the decisions regarding tuition increase disbursement). Further, KU's student body is considered distinctive because of its remarkable diversity. KU attracts a diverse student body not only from within the United States, but also from around the world. Beyond merely being diverse, however, KU's student leaders have embraced diversity through its programming and policies. A final characteristic of the student body mentioned by a number of focus groups is the variety and strong character of the living organizations at KU, including the Greek system, the scholarship halls, and the residence halls, all of which provide students with additional ways to get involved and be a part of the KU community.

- **Shared governance is an important feature at KU.**

Several times, and in a variety of ways, focus group participants mentioned the importance of KU's shared governance as a key feature of the institution. Participation in governance at KU is broad, and university citizenship is the norm here, which speaks to large numbers of people being involved in significant ways. Participants mentioned the decentralization of authority and processes at KU as a distinctive feature, which also points to the level of involvement by a broad number of people. Many groups mentioned that staff and students are routinely included in decision-making, with regular membership in important governance bodies.

- **Alumni are a valuable KU asset.**

Several focus group participants mentioned the importance of KU's alumni to its distinctive character. Beyond the considerable financial support provided by alumni to the Endowment Association, participants stressed the role played by alumni in attracting quality students to the institution, in the maintenance of KU's traditions, and in engendering "passion for the

institution.” Further, the students commented on the importance of the alumni network after graduation, noting that the value of a KU degree extends well beyond their years here.

Distinctiveness of the Learning Environment

- **KU is conducive to high-quality research and learning.**

Focus group participants mentioned several distinctly positive characteristics that lead to good research and teaching at KU. Many participants praised KU’s collaborative characteristics, and this comes to bear most significantly when considering the institution’s learning environment. Participants mentioned how well KU faculty collaborate across disciplines and departments, which furthers both successful research and high-quality teaching. The increased number of joint appointments (across departments, with research groups) were also mentioned to attest to KU’s collaborative nature. Focus groups also mentioned that KU allowed faculty more successfully to balance personal and professional demands in a way that was perceived as conducive to high-quality work. Spousal accommodation was specifically mentioned as a structure put in place to make KU a more attractive place for faculty to work. The Academic Deans’ focus group mentioned a “mixed portfolio of faculty skill sets,” which allows faculty to play to their strengths and focus more heavily on one area than others. Other positive descriptors of KU’s learning environment include “intellectually honest,” a “low arrogance quotient,” and “quietly innovative.”

- **KU has a strong undergraduate focus.**

Participants in the majority of groups described KU as having a strong undergraduate focus, or as one focus group participant stated, as “valuing the undergraduate experience.” This focus could stem from the institution’s and the state’s strong populist roots, which would result in an

institution that would aspire to raise the educational levels of many people, but only so far. KU is committed to serving its undergraduate students, to having senior faculty in undergraduate classrooms, to retaining a strong Liberal Arts/undergraduate focus. Focus groups praised programs like Hawklark, the Honors Program and the Oread Scholars Program as contributing significantly to the quality of undergraduate education. Two focus groups specifically mentioned how well KU's undergraduates fare in graduate school, which further attests to the quality of the undergraduate degree. While mentioned with some frequency, this focus on undergraduate education carried with it neither positive nor negative connotations, except for the tension that can arise between the dueling demands of undergraduate education and research.

- **KU's learning environment demonstrates a tie between research and teaching.**

While there certainly can be tension between the conflicting needs of teaching and research, focus group participants believe that KU is distinctive in its ability to successfully create connections between the two activities. Participants note that KU faculty are successful in bringing their research to bear upon their teaching, of putting their research into practice. Involving undergraduates in faculty research was mentioned not only as a way to create a better learning environment for the students, but could also be viewed as strengthening the connections between teaching and research. On a similar note, several focus groups mentioned that KU appears to balance better the faculty responsibilities of teaching, research, and service than do other institutions, a characteristic that they believe is distinctive.

- **Diversity is important to the learning at KU.**

Diversity, defined in a variety of ways, has been described as an important aspect of the place that is KU, and of the people that populate KU; it can further be considered an important characteristic of the learning that occurs here. One important form of diversity at KU is its

identity, as one focus group member stated, as the international center for Kansas. The academic deans stressed that KU has maintained its large international student population, in spite of significant worldwide unrest. They believe that KU is perceived internationally as “inexpensive and safe.” But more than bringing an international flavor to campus, KU seeks to make a broader understanding of the world a formal part of its curriculum. The student focus group placed high value on the non-western requirement for an undergraduate degree, and they and others thought that KU’s Study Abroad program provided significant learning opportunities. In a more traditional sense of diversity, participants believe that the diversity of the student body adds to the quality of the learning environment at KU. The student focus group, for example, noted that KU’s diversity forced them constantly to keep an open mind and to maintain a broader perspective. Participants mentioned programming by Student Senate, multicultural organizations, and the Office of Multicultural Affairs as important ways that diversity is included in the learning at KU.

- **Quest for Top 25 status may harm the learning environment.**

KU has been described by focus group participants as being collegial, collaborative, friendly, student-centered, and placing value on the teaching role. How, some focus group members wondered, do these characteristics fit with the current quest to become a Top 25 institution? Participants recognized and commented on the tension between KU’s undergraduate focus, which does not always allow time to emphasize research, and its pursuit of greater national recognition, which requires that significant resources be procured and spent on research. Further, can an institution be both competitive and collegial, place high value on both teaching and research? Such questions led focus groups to ponder the place that KU’s quest for Top 25 status plays in relation to its core values.

Challenges Faced by KU

KU's Greatest Challenge—Money.

By far, the greatest concern expressed by all of the focus groups was how KU will respond to year after year of funding challenges—cuts by the state legislature, increased technology needs, physical plant maintenance, the need to offer competitive salaries. In the descriptions that follow, every category could fill in the blank of the sentiment: “How will KU be able to _____ without more money?” It should not be construed that focus groups would consider additional funding to be a general panacea, but certainly they expressed that a *lack* of adequate funding exacerbates virtually every challenge that KU faces in its future.

Challenges to KU as place

- **KU must commit to maintaining its place.**

A majority of the focus groups expressed concern that the institution needs consciously to work to maintain the place that is KU. For some participants, place literally meant the physical plant of the university. Deferred maintenance of buildings and grounds was mentioned as a threat to KU's distinctive nature. Along a similar vein, participants felt that KU would be challenged in the future by growth and space needs, which already plague many buildings and programs across campus. Other concerns about KU's physical place include making the libraries more inviting and parking/bus issues. For other participants, their desire that KU maintain its sense of place was more metaphorical. KU as place is a combination of its physical presence, its traditions, and an awareness that this is a special place to learn and to work, and participants worried that this type of place might be just as vulnerable to deferred maintenance as the actual campus facilities.

- **KU must maintain its traditions in fast-changing times.**

Various constituents expressed concern that KU's many traditions might suffer in the current cultural context, which appears to value change to such a high degree. Similar to their issues with retaining the value of KU as place, participants believe that KU must actively value its traditions or risk their loss of institution-wide prominence. Two aspects of KU's traditions were raised as particular concerns: alumni relationships and commitment to diversity. Focus group participants viewed the institution as challenged to maintain the strong, positive feelings that KU's alumni currently have for the institution. Further, they feared that KU's commitment to diversity might suffer in times when higher education appears to be shying away from openly valuing diversity. Focus group members see KU as challenged in the future to recruit and retain both a diverse student body (undergraduate as well as graduate) and a diverse workforce.

- **KU must work to protect its collegial atmosphere.**

Focus group participants see a variety of threats to the sense of collegiality that pervades KU, not the least of which is funding issues. A number of participants worry that, as competition for diminishing resources continues and/or increases, collegiality will suffer. Concomitant with this concern is the tension inherent in the relationship between a drive for increased research and collegiality. Again, the KU community will be forced to allocate its resources in such a way that some will get more while their colleagues get less. KU's quest to become a Top 25 institution was seen as a specific threat to the collegial place that is KU. The academic deans wondered if this pursuit is consistent or in conflict with KU's values. University Council asked themselves whether we would have to become more internally competitive in order to be more nationally competitive, and at what cost to collegiality.

- **KU must maintain/improve its relationship with the state.**

One of the characteristics that makes KU distinctive is its complex, even tenuous relationship with the state of Kansas. This distinctive characteristic will, according to focus group participants, provide challenges for the institution in future years. The Chancellor's Policy Group, for example, feels that KU will be tested in the future by the rules and regulations imposed on it by various state organizations. They were further concerned by the status of K-12 education in Kansas, and how changes at those levels will affect higher education. Most focus groups expressed concern about KU's relationship with the state legislature. One focus group stressed the importance of impressing upon the legislature that higher education is an expensive enterprise, and a worthy expense for the state. Others were concerned by what they perceive as an anti-intellectual trend in both national and state politics, and the consequences of such on all of higher education. Other focus group participants believe that KU will be challenged by their reputation with the state as a whole, not just the legislature. They hope for more and better publicity for KU within Kansas, perhaps for a more coherent union between its national and state reputations.

Challenges to the People

- **KU must continue to focus on its diversity.**

Every single focus group believes that KU must be aware of the future challenges presented by diversity. Not only does diversity play an important role in the traditions and history of KU, but the institution must be prepared for the diverse student population that will be entering college in future decades. The demographics of KU's student base are likely to undergo significant change—more non-traditionally aged students, more married/parent students, more students who

work full- or part-time, more non-resident students, more students with learning disabilities, more ethnic minorities. All of these student groups will bring different needs to the institution, and KU must respond accordingly. At the same time, KU (and all US institutions) is facing increasing competition for international students, particularly as the institution becomes more expensive to attend. Another challenge that students in future classes will present to the institution, both in the classroom and out, is their technological proficiency, and their expectations that KU will be ready to meet their technological needs. Focus group participants believe that KU will be challenged to meet the needs of this increasingly diverse student body, fewer and fewer of whom will be traditional 18-22 year olds who attend college full-time, live on campus, and have only minimal commitments other than school. A final challenge that the institution must face with its future student population is to remain financially accessible. Two focus groups expressed concern that KU not become a tuition-driven institution in such a way that is cost prohibitive. The student focus group went so far as to say that, in order to remain affordable, KU should “fight for support for higher education.”

- **KU must meet the challenge of recruiting and retaining the best and brightest.**

Most focus groups mentioned KU’s need to continue attracting high quality students, staff, and faculty as a future challenge. One group, for example, expressed concern that KU’s student recruitment does not play up the institution’s sense of community effectively enough. They believe that KU’s welcoming, open community is not adequately expressed in its recruitment efforts, which will hurt its efforts in attracting good students, both in-state and out-of-state. Others believe that salary issues at all levels will hurt KU’s ability to keep a high-quality workforce. While this issue is usually addressed in relation to faculty, and our ability to compete with the salaries offered at peer institutions (even the students were worried about faculty

salaries), some focus group members worried about salary compression and the lack of growth opportunities for classified and unclassified staff. Another concern expressed was the need to fund the type of aggressive recruiting that will attract bright colleagues to KU.

- **KU must work to keep its many constituents involved.**

While not mentioned as widely as the other topics, some focus group participants believed that KU's high level of constituent involvement will be challenged in the future. One group mentioned the lack of a faculty club, a place where faculty can meet and connect, and the challenges that places on KU to keep faculty interested in broader, university-wide issues. One participant expressed the concern that the faculty voice is already being limited in decision-making, and that this trend might continue. The student focus group believes that the university should keep its students heavily involved in campus-wide activities and governance, and that doing so will ensure a strong base of continued alumni support. Staff also expressed a desire for continued involvement in shared governance, but also believe that the institution will be challenged to find opportunities other than governance for staff to interact and feel connected to KU.

Challenges to KU's learning environment

- **KU must carefully negotiate its relationship with Kansas/the federal government.**

The role of KU's relationship with Kansas and with the federal government was explored in the challenges to KU as place, but focus group participants believe that there are additional factors in these relationships that may challenge the learning environment as well. For example, a number of focus groups were concerned about KU's ability to respond to mandates from the state and federal government for additional assessment and evaluation (much like what K-12 education is

facing). As one group pointed out, these mandates drain valuable resources—both in staff/administrative time and money. Other challenges at the federal level include our ability to track and keep up with changing federal funding shifts, and the anti-intellectual trend in the federal government, all of which have the potential to adversely affect KU's learning environment. Focus group participants had other concerns about how our relationship with the state could affect learning. Many participants believe that residents of Kansas do not know or fully appreciate the level at which KU serves the state. Specific examples given included the state focus of KU's Medical programs (particularly nursing) and the institution's involvement in the economic development of Kansas. One focus group expressed the belief that KU has the evidence of its many contributions to the state, but is not as effective as it should be in conveying this information. This lack of appreciation of the institution's significant relationship with Kansas is believed to have a rippling effect—Kansas constituents do not value the institution, therefore do not support it, and in the end, the learning environment will suffer.

- **KU must address the challenges faced by undergraduate/liberal arts education.**

Focus group participants saw a number of challenges to the future of undergraduate education at KU. The student focus group (primarily undergraduates) was concerned that KU maintain the academic integrity of the degree, particularly in light of the proliferation of “speed degrees” available from other institutions, and also in light of the grade inflation that appears to be plaguing higher education. They also predicted an increase in the tensions between the traditional liberal arts degree and the professional school programs, as more students come to college seeking skills that are directly employable. Finally, the student focus group believed that KU should maintain and even strengthen its Study Abroad program while keeping it an affordable option for students. Many other focus group participants were concerned about the

tensions inherent between a strong undergraduate/liberal arts focus, and an academic climate that increasingly values funded research. Two focus groups specifically mentioned a concern that KU continue to care/value undergraduate education in light of the push for more research.

Another focus group wondered whether the drive for external funding sources would fundamentally change the university and its tradition of valuing the liberal arts. A “clash of values” was also mentioned by another focus group, who worried what the cost to quality would be should KU try to continue being both strong in the liberal arts and strong in research. A final group stated simply that quality undergraduate education should be preserved at KU.

- **KU must remain a collegial learning environment, regardless of research pressures.**

Concern about the pervasive tensions placed upon the university because of its drive for greater research funding permeated a number of topics. One of the central concerns about the institution’s increased focus on research was the potential effect on KU’s intellectual collegiality. Two focus groups pondered whether KU would be able to maintain its collegiality “as external pressures and aspirations increase.” One group wondered whether KU would continue to be a place where faculty could explore non-revenue-generating ideas, and could focus on student and collegial relationships, without fear of reprisal. Another group expressed concern about the tension between KU’s drive for excellence and collegiality. These comments and others, either implicitly or explicitly, refer to KU’s pursuit of Top 25 status. The belief was pervasive that KU will be challenged to remain a place without a “star system,” with broad participation in all levels of the educational enterprise, and where the faculty can be described as both innovative and humble, in light of this quest for more research funding. Many fear that there will be some sort of tradeoff, and just what that tradeoff will be.

- **KU must stay current/be a leader in technology.**

A majority of focus groups discussed the challenges faced by KU regarding technology and future technological needs. Participants are aware that KU will be challenged merely to stay current with the institution's technological needs, let alone be on the forefront. Some comments referred more to KU's technology infrastructure: Students were frustrated with the technological capabilities of the residence halls, for example, and their lack of ability to get transcripts online or use wireless technology on campus. Others saw the challenges placed upon research and teaching activities by the need for cutting-edge, expensive technology; colleagues in the KUMC focus group were especially concerned about their need for the latest medical equipment in both labs and classrooms. One group mentioned the explosion of online course offerings at KU, and wondered about the ramifications of such on both our technology needs and the need to successfully bridge the gap between technology and human interaction. In a similar light, some focus group participants worried that collegiality and KU's learning environment in general may suffer as use of technology increases (for example, emails instead of phone calls or meetings).

Appendix A: Matrix of Topics

Distinctiveness (Table 1 of 2)

P=Positive Comments N=Negative Comments ?=unable to classify

Topics--distinctiveness	Research Directors	Academic Deans	KUMC Leaders	NCA Steering Comm.	Class and UPISA	University Council	Chancellor's Policy Group	Students
"Kinder, Gentler syndrome"							?	
"Star" system is negligible	P			P				
Academics/graduation is important					P			
Accessible Administration	P					P		P
Accountability/willing to make tough decisions							P	
Alumni support				P		P		P
Athletics							P	P
Balance betw/ need-driven and knowledge-driven research (EEB, earth science)	P							
Balance of teaching/research/service		P				P		
Bargain--national reputation as such						P		
Better reputation nationally than within state	P/N	P/N						
Collaboration across disciplines	P			P			P	
Collaborative structures (i.e., spousal accommodations)							P	
Collegial environment	P	P/N	P	P		P	P	
Decentralization of authority and processes		P						
Dept/ disciplinary in its emphasis	P							
Discourse is open							P	
Diversity/inclusiveness is accepted/valued				P	P	P	P	P
Dynamic, energetic								P
Economic Development contributor	P	P						
Emphasis on gaining Top 25 status	P/N	P/N	P/N					
Endowment is strong				P			P	
Extracurricular opportunities								P/N
Faculty is world-class								P
Faculty/student contact valued	P		P	P		P	P	P
Flagship institution	P		P	P	P	P	P/N	
Flagship, but not valued by state as such	P					P	N	
Focus on life sciences	P/N	P/N					P	
Friendly, not snobs					P	P	P	P
Frugality of Institution				P/N				
Governance is shared		P	P	P		P	P	P
High standards							P	
Higher Education Leader							P	
Honors program is strong				P		P		
Humble/Institutional Inferiority complex	N						P/N	
Innovative				P				
Intellectually honest	P			P			P	
Interdisciplinary	P	P		P			P	
International in scope (surprises people)				P	P	P	P	P
Kansas/Kansans as focus		P	P	P				
Leadership							P	
Level playing field							P	
Liberal Arts emphasis				P	P		P	
Low arrogance quotient	P			P				
Loyalty to Institution				P	P	P	P	P
Mascot recognition				P				
Mission-driven approach to change				P				
Museums/arts very strong					P			

Appendix A: Matrix of Topics

Distinctiveness (Table 2 of 2)

P=Positive Comments N=Negative Comments ?=unable to classify

Topics--distinctiveness	Research Directors	Academic Deans	KUMC Leaders	NCA Steering Comm.	Class and UPSA	University Council	Chancellor's Policy Group	Students
National reputation of faculty--	P				P			
Niche programs of excellence	P					P		
Norm of university citizenship	P					P		
Not good outreach capability	N	N						
Organizational learning							P	
Overachieving--better faculty than it deserves	P							
Overachieving--given its budget	P			P	P			
Overachieving--given its environment	P							
Overachieving--given its resources	P							
Participation is broad					P	P		
Place is important		P/N		P				
Place--attractive campus		P		P	P	P		P
Place--balance between work and home				P				
Place--close to KC/Topeka		P		P		P		P
Place--community (Big institution/small feel)		P		P	P	P	P	P
Place--Town-gown gap is missing		P				P		P
Populist	P			P			P/N	
Public University						P		
Quality breadth and depth							P	
Quality commitment by faculty and staff					P	P		P
Quietly Innovative			P					
Research focus does not overshadow UG education							P	
Research structure is unique							P	
Research/teaching/practice tied				P		P	P	
Self-confident institution							P	
Senior Faculty involvement in UG teaching				P				
Service organization							P	
Staff feel like part of the community				P				
Staff included in decision-making					P	P		P
Staff quality				P				
Strong living organizations (Greek life, Scholarship halls, focused res								P
Structural change implemented successfully							P	
Student Diversity		P	P	P	P			P
Student engagement		P		P	P	P	P	P
Student quality--out-of-state and international students		P		P	P			P
Student Scholarships								P/N
Students involved in community		P						P
Students--Good educational experiences	P					P	P	
Students--institution cares for them				P	P	P		P
Students--part of decision-making						P	P	P
Study Abroad Opportunities						P	P	P
Teaching as emphasis	P			P				
Technology use is getting better				P/N				N
Traditions are valued				P		P	P	P
UG Education is a strong focus	P			P	P	P	P	
UGs successful in grad school	P							
Value for the money				P		P		P
Welcoming to new students								P
Well-kept secret	P							
Women-friendly				P				

Appendix A: Matrix of Topics

Challenges (Table 1 of 2)

P=Positive Comments N=Negative Comments ?=unable to classify

Topics--future challenges	Research Directors	Academic Deans	KUMC Leaders	NCA Steering Comm.	Class and UPISA	University Council	Chancellor's Policy Group	Students
Access--not tuition-driven						P/N		P
Alumni Relationships								P
Assessment & evaluation mandates		N		N			N	
Collaboration/Innovation							P	
Collegiality vs. a variety of stressors						P/N	P	
Collegiality vs. Research				P/N		P/N		
Commitment to University values					P/N		P	P
Constraints of being a state univ.							N	
Cost issues	P		P		P	P	P	N
Cultural wars at state/national levels				N	N	N	N	
Curricular challenges--liberal arts vs. professional					P/N			P/N
Diversity as continuing focus	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Entrepreneurship/ economic development	P						P	
Faculty club is lacking				N				
Faculty voice being limited				N				
Federal changes							P	
High Academic Standards								P
Implications of life sciences thrust		P/N						
Interactions beyond governance					P/N			
International/global context						P	P	
Is top 25 consistent with KU values?		P/N				P/N	P/N	
K-12 Education's status in Kansas							P/N	
Library not inviting				N				
National reputation vs. populist state						P/N		
Nimble & adaptive in context of conservative, risk-averse culture	P/N			P/N	P/N			
Nimble & adaptive in facing rapid pace of change	P/N		P	P/N			P	
Non-traditional students on the increase				P	P		P	
Organization of graduate education	P							
Organizing for multidisciplinary research & grad training	P							
Parking/KU Bus Schedule			N					N
Participation in university-wide issues					P/N			
Partnership between research & teaching	P							
Place/Community maintenance				P/N	P	P	P	
Population changes	P	P			P	P	P	
Preservation of strong traditions				P/N	P	P	P	
Proof of Concept	P							
Protection of values within changing structure		P/N		P	P			
Publicity--more & better in state							P	P
Reactive vs. Proactive					N			
Recognition of benefits by state						N		
Recruiting students						P		
Recruitment/Retention of good faculty			P/N				P	

Appendix A: Matrix of Topics

Challenges (Table 2 of 2)

P=Positive Comments N=Negative Comments ?=unable to classify

Topics--future challenges	Research Directors	Academic Deans	KUMC Leaders	NCA Steering Comm.	Class and UPSA	University Council	Chancellor's Policy Group	Students
Relationship with Regents	P							
Relationship with state/legislature	P			N	N	P	P	P
Relationships with Endowment, Alumni Association				P				
Research needs vs. Liberal Arts culture				P/N	P/N	P/N		
Salary issues					N		N	N
Security Issues							P/N	
Space Issues			N	N	P/N			
Staff and Faculty quality maintained					P			
Staffing					N			
Students connected/involved								P
Study Abroad opportunities/expenses								P/N
Technology			P/N	P/N	P/N		P	N
Tuition concerns						P/N		N
UG education as continuing focus						P/N		P

Appendix A: Matrix of Topics

Issues Specific to KU Medical Center

Distinctiveness:

Hospital/Medical Center Separation
KUMC collaborates with multiple Institutions
One University
How does outcome data flow back into curriculum?
(Dorothy's surveys?)
Culturally competing demands--aging population vs. cultural diversity
TeleMed outreach
Bridge Program
Rural emphasis of the program
Structural changes to meet market demands
Business-like climate
Hagen's work to establish relationship in KCK community

Challenges:

Clinical vs. Research faculty in division of resources
Intentional planning
Alternative models of education
Unclear faculty governance issues
Faculty assembly Research Committee
KUMC climate
Movement of centers and funding into the School of Medicine
Hagen's 12 principles of management 2000
Dykes Library
Continuing relationship with community

Appendix B: A Comparison of NCA Focus Group Findings and Pew Roundtable Findings

In the spring of 1997, a representative from the Pew Foundation conducted a series of roundtables at the University of Kansas. The central question that shaped these roundtables was: What are KU's values and how should we deal with change in light of this value set? While the question was not identical to those posed to participants in the NCA focus groups, the results show that both studies reveal similar themes. The similarity of these themes, mentioned by groups addressing ostensibly different questions, more than 6 years apart, lends credence to their legitimacy as issues that KU does value, that make the institution distinctive.

- **Maintain KU's values and traditions.**

The written summary of the Pew Roundtables states that "there are important KU values and traditions that need to be articulated and preserved," a sentiment echoed strongly in the NCA Focus Groups. Participants in both settings articulated some of those values and traditions, including "the hill," a strong sense of what it means to be a Jayhawk, high value placed on the physical beauty of the main campus, and the strong value placed upon the preservation of tradition in general at KU.

- **KU has a strong sense of place.**

Findings from both sets of conversations stressed KU's sense of place, both in the physical sense (as mentioned above) and the metaphorical place that is KU. For example, the Pew Roundtable results comment on the importance of maintaining KU's sense of place, and how doing so will further strengthen the collaborative nature of learning here. Similar issues were raised in the NCA Focus Groups when participants were asked to describe challenges faced by KU in the future. Sense of place and the collegial environment were both mentioned by the NCA groups as

distinctive characteristics that KU should work to protect and strengthen.

- **KU is defined by its commitment to diversity.**

KU's commitment to diversity was discussed at considerable length by the NCA Focus Groups. Participants saw its diverse faculty and student body as an important feature of KU's past, a defining characteristic of its present, and an key component to a successful future. The Pew Roundtables also discussed the importance of diversity, mentioning specifically KU's dedication to being a community of diverse perspectives that respects people of diverse backgrounds and opinions.

- **KU will be challenged by the need to publicize its strengths more effectively.**

Both the Pew Roundtables and the NCA Focus Groups mentioned KU's external image, particularly within the state of Kansas, as an area of future concern/challenge. The Pew Roundtable believes that one of KU's main objectives is to better communicate beyond the KU community. Similarly, the NCA Focus Groups believe that KU will be challenged in the future by the need for more and better publicity for KU within Kansas. While the Pew Roundtable participants stressed KU's commitment to Lawrence and the state of Kansas in the form of ongoing communications and continuing education opportunities, the NCA Focus Groups revealed the attitude that, while the institution may be reaching out, the state does not always acknowledge those efforts. This inconsistency between what KU is doing and how it is perceived will continue to provide challenges in the future.

- **Technology will play an important part in KU's future.**

Technology played a key role in the Pew Roundtable discussions. Participants talked at length about the role technology could play in the institution's efforts to maintain its values, particularly the relationship between technology and KU's commitment to an on-campus, residential learning

experience. They perceived technology as a key component to the successful continuation of KU's collaborative, learning-centered environment. Technology was also discussed in the NCA Focus Groups, but perhaps because of the intervening six years (or because of the difference in questions addressed), the conversations were slightly different. The NCA groups were more concerned that KU keep up with the technological demands of its students and the need for laboratories and other learning experiences that use the latest technology. So while the latter expressed concern about KU's need to stay technologically current, the former saw the potential of where technology could take the institution in the future.