



THE KU STORY

The University of Kansas is a tradition-rich, comprehensive public research university with a distinguished history. Opened in 1866, the university was one of the first 11 public universities west of the Mississippi River to be admitted to the Association of American Universities and was granted the first chapters of Phi Beta Kappa and Sigma Xi.

In many ways, KU is an institution defined by its traditions. The institutional culture that has evolved since KU's founding is an extension of the state's long-held populist beliefs. Since its inception, KU has fostered an atmosphere that values diversity in its many manifestations. The University of Kansas is proud of the fact that it is one of the few public institutions of higher learning founded in the 1800s that never in its history denied entrance on the basis of race or gender.

KU students represent all 50 states, 3 U.S. Territories, and over 100 countries. One-third of KU's students are from outside the state of Kansas, and more than 7 percent come from abroad. This diversity has a remarkable enriching effect on the student body and on the larger community, providing a benefit that the KU founders could not have imagined.

Academic Excellence

KU has an outstanding academic reputation. *U.S. News* consistently rates KU as a top 50 public university, offering a wide range of undergraduate majors, as well as master's and doctoral degrees. In addition, 25 KU graduate programs are ranked in the top 25 of their discipline, 15 of which are in the top 10 among public universities. The 2009 *Fiske Guide to Colleges* lauds the University of Kansas as one of the "best buys" among public universities in the nation.

KU traditionally has attracted talented and ambitious students. KU's average ACT score of 24.7 for fall 2009 is well above the most recent (fall 2008) national average of 22.1. KU students have a strong record of prestigious fellowships, including Fulbright Fellows and Rhodes Scholars as well as Goldwater, Marshall, Mellon, Gates-Cambridge, Truman, Eisenhower/Roberts and Udall scholarships. KU nurtures talented students in the University Honors Program, with an average of 1,300 undergraduate students participating each year. In addition to academic success, KU prides itself on a tradition of active and meaningful student involvement.

The excellence of KU faculty in research and teaching is nationally recognized, including 285 Fulbright awards. Seven are members of the National Academies, five are fellows of the National Academy of Public Administration, and more than 30 are fellows of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Outstanding faculty are recognized through a number of awards for teaching, research, and service at KU. The collegiality of the working environment is an important characteristic of KU, both within departments and in interdisciplinary groups.

Integrated Mission

The mission statement of the University of Kansas encompasses teaching, research, and service, as well as an international dimension and humanitarian values. At KU, research and teaching are interdependent, with scholarly inquiry underlying and informing the educational experience at the undergraduate, professional, and graduate levels. Outstanding library collections, teaching museums, scholarship halls, the honors program, and opportunities to study abroad complement and enrich classroom instruction and research endeavors.

The University's traditional commitment to undergraduate teaching is an integral part of the KU culture. The success of this commitment was nationally recognized by KU's inclusion in the book *Student Success in College*, which describes policies, programs, and practices that enhance undergraduate student achievement at 20 exemplary institutions. The authors found a norm of close working relationships between students and faculty that pervades the University and plays an important role in student success.

In addition to undergraduate instruction, the University takes seriously its responsibility as an educator of the future professorate. For example, the Self Graduate Fellowship program provides general education and training to help prepare the fellows for future leadership roles. Further evidence of the University commitment to teaching is the creation of the KU Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) – the result of a grassroots effort by faculty. CTE provides development opportunities and support for all instructors – from tenured professors to novice graduate teaching assistants – through seminars, workshops, mentoring, and a teaching commons that lasts throughout the year.

Research and scholarship continue to thrive and expand at the University. KU's annual total research, development, and training expenditures have more than doubled during the past 10 years, growing from \$147 million in FY 1998 to \$297 million in FY 2008. Recent major initiatives include the development of KU's West Campus biosciences facilities, expansion of historic strengths in drug discovery and delivery, the formation of a multidisciplinary KU Energy Council, and advances in the remote sensing of global ice sheets. In addition, KU's number one research priority is to achieve National Cancer Institute (NCI) Comprehensive Cancer Center designation within the next decade.

As a comprehensive research university, the University of Kansas has outstanding graduate and research programs across the range of academic disciplines. The Hall Center for the Humanities is recognized as one of the premier humanities centers in the nation. The Schiefelbusch Institute for Life Span Studies commands the largest external funding support of any research center on the Lawrence campus and is a reflection of KU's long-time strengths in disabilities research and intervention. The state and the University's joint commitment to life sciences research ensures a large role for the Higuchi Biosciences Center in shaping the research face of the campus.

Service is an integral part of the academic responsibility at KU as well. One of the institution's earliest examples is the Kansas Geological Survey, formed in 1889 to study the state's resources and to promote a better understanding of the geology of Kansas. Other examples are the Kansas Law Enforcement Training Center and the Kansas Fire and Rescue Training Institute, which provide specialized statewide training on basic protection of life and property.

By emphasizing international experience, KU prepares students for citizenship in an increasingly diverse and global community. Based on a strong humanities core, KU area and language studies have been a national resource for decades. Language and area studies programs are supported by extensive opportunities to study abroad in more than 60 countries. About 1,000 students study abroad each year, and KU ranks 11th among the nation's public research institutions in the percent of undergraduate participation in study abroad.

A Distinctive Place

Members of the KU community often remark on KU's distinctiveness in place, people, and the learning environment. The concept of distinctiveness and the collegiality that pervades campus perhaps account for the great loyalty to KU by faculty, staff, and alumni. This atmosphere has also made KU's Endowment and Alumni Associations tremendously successful.

People feel strongly tied not just to KU as an institution in some abstract sense, but to the Lawrence campus, its physical place and its beauty. Mount Oread – “the Hill” – is the site of many long-standing traditions, including the “torch pass” that marks the beginning of the academic year and the “walk down the hill” at graduation. Each August, the torch pass comes down Mount Oread, through the World War II Campanile, and into the Stadium, a World War I memorial. This torch of learning is carried by a senior, who passes the torch to a junior, then to a sophomore, then to a fifth-generation freshman student, symbolizing the direct line of knowledge transmission that extends through all who come to learn on the KU campus. Each May, the new graduates retrace the path taken by the torch pass – through the Campanile and down the hill to Memorial Stadium, where their degrees are conferred. This gesture brings to conclusion a journey that encompasses the “free state” spirit of inquiry, inclusion, and collaboration that defines the University of Kansas.