



## THE TALENT IMPERATIVE!



NORTHERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY'S  
2007-2012 STRATEGIC PLAN

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# THE TALENT IMPERATIVE!

## NORTHERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY'S 2007-2012 STRATEGIC PLAN

### INTELLECTUAL AND CREATIVE TALENT ARE MORE VITAL TO ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROGRESS THAN AT ANY OTHER TIME IN HISTORY.

Thomas Friedman, *New York Times* columnist, asserts that “the world is flat,” meaning nations throughout the world are now able to compete economically on a more level playing field based on their access to talent. Richard Florida, futurist, responds that the world is really “spiky” with the spikes representing concentrations of talent in cities and regions throughout the world. In fact, both are correct, and their observations provide the backdrop for Northern Kentucky University's 2007-2012 Strategic Agenda.

In today's world, regions that thrive will be those that can successfully develop, recruit and retain the talent necessary to drive innovation across a broad range of economic and social endeavors. Regions lacking the intellectual and creative talent will have an uncertain future. In other words, in today's world, *it's all about talent!*

Talented people choose where to live based on two considerations: professional opportunity and quality of life as measured by a combination of physical, social and cultural assets. Regions that hope to compete for talent must offer high-value jobs, but they must also offer great schools, great parks and cultural venues, safe and attractive neighborhoods, a strong urban core, and an attitude of openness that welcomes diversity and sees strength in human differences.

Regions that make talent a central priority are anchored by high-performing universities that not only nurture talent in their classrooms and laboratories but also apply their knowledge to advance regional economic and social progress. In other words, they are stewards of their region or what we refer to as “*stewards of place.*”

NKU is unique among Kentucky's comprehensive universities in that we serve a major metropolitan region of nearly 400,000 people that generates about 17 percent of the commonwealth's total economic output. We are also unique in that, over the past decade, we have become nationally acclaimed for our regional stewardship. Our 2007-2012 strategic agenda is designed to strengthen our ability to help our students and our region achieve their aspirations.



## A DECADE OF PROGRESS

Ten years ago, NKU embarked on an ambitious journey to become a nationally recognized metropolitan university known for the contributions we make to our students and our region. We designed a strategic planning process called "Vision, Values and Voices," or VVV, and used a panel of faculty, staff, students and community members to engage both the campus and the region in discussions about current needs and aspirations. From this we developed a vision for the university, a set of core values that would inform our work, and a set of strategic priorities using a five-year horizon. In 2003, we updated our strategic priorities using the same planning process.

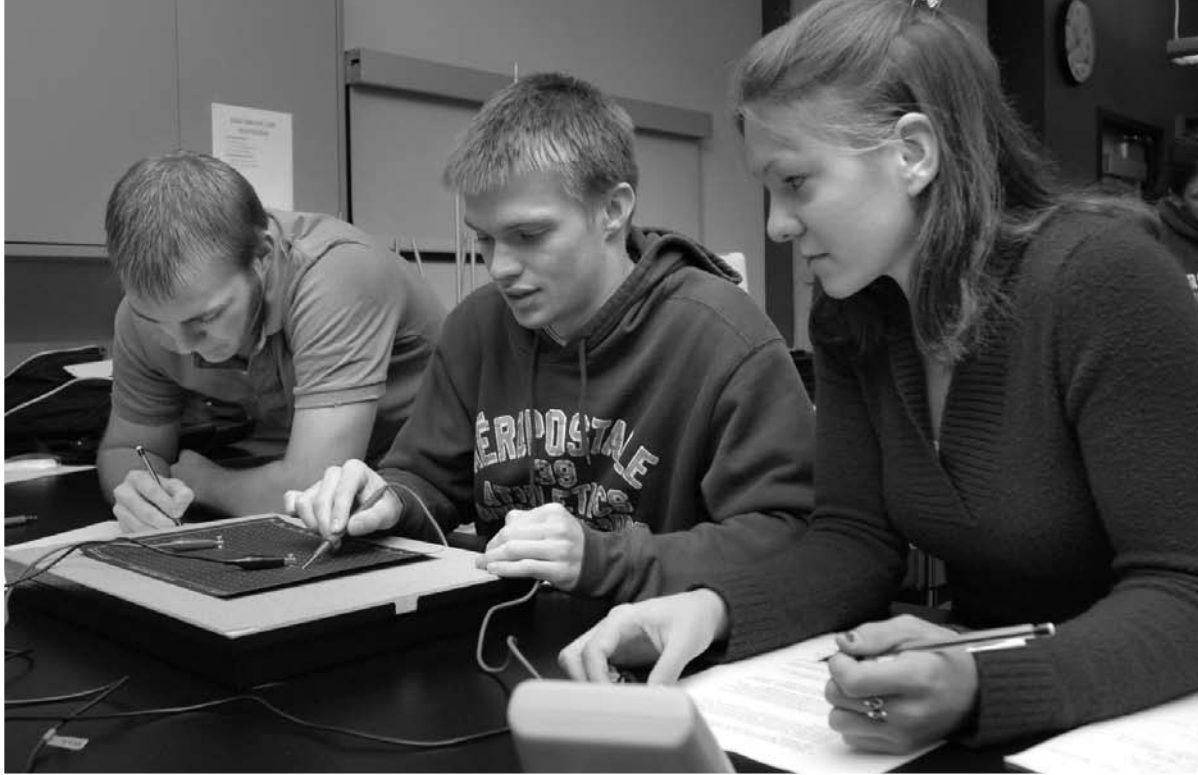
The past decade has been one of dramatic campus growth and development. Enrollment has grown 24 percent, even with more rigorous admission standards. A broad range of new and expanded academic programs were launched based on regional need. In order to become more student-friendly, we moved our undergraduate and graduate programs beyond the traditional delivery formats to include evenings, weekends, off-campus, concentrated and technology-enhanced instruction. Several academic programs have achieved national recognition. Extracurricular programming and participation have greatly expanded. Nearly \$300 million in facilities have been added. And we have become a national model for the "stewardship of place" by building community partnerships to enhance regional progress.

During this same period, however, the university's most distinctive qualities did not change. Average class size remained at about 20 with a student/faculty ratio of 17:1. A new generation of faculty and staff assumed leadership with the same commitment to keeping students at the center of all that we do. While the campus has grown in size, the environment is still described by students as "up close and personal." Students speak with great pride about the quality of their educational experience.

Faculty and staff morale is high. Both groups express strong confidence in the university and its future. We continue to be an institution that fosters innovation in our programs and services, as well as where, when, and how we deliver them. Our civic, governmental and donor support has never been stronger. Likewise, our reputation for offering high-quality undergraduate, graduate and professional programs has never been better.

Over the past decade, NKU has moved from being the region's community college and comprehensive university to being a truly distinctive university that is poised for the next level in its development.





## VISION, VALUES AND VOICES III

In November 2006, the university once again convened a panel of faculty, staff, students and community members to update the campus strategic plan and recommend priorities for the next five years. The panel was co-chaired by the president, the vice president for academic affairs and provost, and the 2006-07 winner of the NKU outstanding faculty award.

The panel used the region's recently completed Vision 2015 Strategic Plan as the voice of the northern Kentucky region. It could then focus its attention on obtaining input from the university community. Over a two-month period, the panel engaged nearly 600 faculty, staff, students and alumni in conversations focused on what the university does well, what it can do better, and what opportunities and challenges it faces.

After the panel completed its work in early January, the university administration analyzed its recommendations and began sharing them with campus governance groups as well as with the university's Board of Regents. Based on feedback received from the various groups, some modifications were made, and the recommendations were forwarded to the Board of Regents for their adoption in May 2007.

## PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS

NKU, like every other university, is embedded in a social, political and economic context in which our goals and aspirations must be tempered by the realities of the environment. Thus, in developing our five-year strategic plan, we have considered not only the voices of our university community and the surrounding region but also the external realities that we will be confronting in the next five years. We have made the following assumptions:

- Technological advances and changing student demands will continue to impact those we serve as well as what, where, when, and how we serve them.
- Public demand for greater accountability and transparency will require us to do a better job of measuring what we do and the impact that we have on our students and our region.
- Postsecondary education will continue to compete for funds with other priorities at both the state and federal level, requiring us to demonstrate our contribution to the larger public agenda.
- Concern over college affordability will further increase public pressure to keep tuition low and increase need-based financial aid.
- Competition for well-prepared students will continue to increase, requiring further investments in marketing, student recruitment and innovative instructional design.



- Public funding for NKU will increase but is unlikely to keep pace with ever-increasing public demand for programs and services.
- Regional leaders of the Vision 2015 implementation process will continue to look to NKU for support, placing further stress on our human and financial resources and requiring us to focus our efforts where we can have the greatest impact.
- Increasing globalization will require the university to become more international in scope as we prepare our students for the world in which they will live and work.

## THE STRATEGIC PLAN

We have had 10 years of dynamic institutional enrollment and programmatic expansion that has been both exhilarating and stressful. Over the next five years, we must focus our efforts and execute our strategy in a way that helps ensure that everything we are doing is done well. *Focus* and *execution* should be at the core of our strategy for the next five years.

The following sections of this document present NKU's mission, vision, core values and the 2007-2012 strategic priorities. With the help of the 2006-07 VVV panel and with input from many campus groups, we have restated our mission and slightly revised our vision and core values, but the fundamental elements remain the same and were strongly reaffirmed throughout the planning process.

Our new five-year strategic priorities are organized around four major themes: develop talent, increase student engagement in learning, ensure academic quality and engage in effective regional stewardship. The need to internationalize our campus is reflected in specific priorities within each of the themes.

To accomplish our major priorities we will need to better position ourselves to recruit and retain outstanding faculty and staff, increase public awareness of the university, expand our financial and capital assets, and increase institutional effectiveness by implementing a comprehensive planning and performance system. These goals are reflected in the four supporting priority areas that follow the strategic priorities.

## UNIVERSITY MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Northern Kentucky University is to educate students to succeed in their chosen life roles; be informed, contributing members of their communities – regionally, nationally, and internationally; and pursue satisfying and fulfilling lives. The university will offer a comprehensive array of baccalaureate and master's programs as well as law and other selected doctoral programs that meet regional needs.

The university supports multi-dimensional excellence across the full breadth of its work: teaching and learning, research and creative activity, and outreach and public engagement. Northern Kentucky University fosters a community that values openness, inclusion and respect. The university is committed to intellectual and creative freedom and to the open expression of ideas in ways that support scholarship and advance the learning process. The university embraces its regional stewardship role as reflected in its significant contribution to the intellectual, social, economic, cultural and civic vitality of the region and the commonwealth.

Northern Kentucky University achieves its mission through outstanding faculty, state-of-the-art programs and community partnerships. The university prides itself on its learner focus, entrepreneurial spirit, global perspective, innovative programs, small classes, technology-enhanced academic programs, co-curricular learning opportunities, and emphasis on active learning, including student research, internships, co-op programs and service learning.

Northern Kentucky University is the commonwealth's only regional university located in a major metropolitan area. The university values its role as an integral part of the metropolitan region and recognizes the region as a powerful source of knowledge and experience that can strengthen, enhance and enrich every aspect of the university. Regional stewardship informs every dimension of the university's mission.

## VISION STATEMENT

Northern Kentucky University will be nationally recognized as the premier comprehensive, metropolitan university that prepares students for life and work in a global society and provides leadership to advance the intellectual, social, economic, cultural, and civic vitality of its region and of the commonwealth.

## CORE VALUES

*NKU is committed to:*

- Placing learners and their learning at the center of all that we do.
- The highest standards of excellence in every dimension of our work.
- Access to education that holds high expectations for all students and provides support for their success.
- Public engagement that advances the progress of the region and commonwealth.
- Intellectual and creative freedom and the free expression of ideas.
- A culture of openness and inclusion that values diversity in people and ideas.
- A work environment that encourages and rewards innovation and creativity.
- A campus climate that supports collegiality, collaboration and civility.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

### DEVELOP TALENT

*The university's primary role is to develop talent in northern Kentucky and the commonwealth. To sustain our commitment to talent development and meet the ever-expanding needs of our region and the commonwealth, we will:*

- Build a commitment to seek a postsecondary degree in the minds of elementary, middle, and high school students as well as in the minds of working adults who lack such degrees.
- Encourage and support an increase in the number of people in our region who are prepared for postsecondary degrees.
- Offer educational and enrichment programs to serve high-ability and talented youth, in their schools and on our campus, face-to-face and through technology, in the summer and during the school year.
- Increase our undergraduate enrollment, retention and graduation rates consistent with available financial and physical resources and Council on Postsecondary Education targets.
- Increase the number of graduate certificate and degree programs and our enrollment of graduate students to address the needs of the region and the commonwealth.





- Enroll and retain a more diverse student body, including more students of color and students from other parts of the world.
- Increase our enrollment of transfer students, adult learners and low-income students in northern Kentucky to raise the educational attainment levels in the region and the commonwealth.
- Compete for high-performing students while maintaining a commitment to broad-based student access.
- Expand opportunities for working adults to earn undergraduate and graduate degrees and certificates through programs delivered in non-traditional ways, such as off-campus, web-based, cohort and work-site based programs.
- Increase need-based financial aid to provide access for a larger number of students.
- Assure a coordinated, broad-based retention program that serves students throughout their undergraduate experience.

#### INCREASE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN LEARNING

*Active engagement with the university and the learning process is associated with deeper learning and student success. To promote this active engagement, we will:*

- Maintain an “up close and personal” approach to education by increasing student interaction with faculty and staff inside and outside of class, retaining small classes and ensuring outstanding advising for all students.
- Increase opportunities for active learning through student research and creative work, service learning and alternative spring break programs.
- Integrate student learning and employment by expanding both campus and community-based work-study, cooperative education, practica and internship opportunities.
- Expand opportunities for students to study abroad and learn from international students enrolled at NKU.
- Increase student involvement in campus-based organizations, including academic clubs.

- Enhance co-curricular, cultural, social, recreational and wellness programs to address the distinctive needs, interests and availability of our commuting, residential and non-traditional students.

#### ENSURE ACADEMIC QUALITY

*Nothing is more fundamental to our value as a university than the quality of our academic programs. To ensure exemplary academic programs and a rich learning environment, we will:*

- Ensure a supportive campus environment that enables students to thrive academically and socially and that fosters high-quality relations among students, faculty and staff.
- Internationalize the NKU learning experience by infusing a global perspective in the curriculum, partnering with overseas institutions, increasing faculty exchanges and expanding opportunities for faculty to work and study abroad.
- Foster teaching methods that establish clear expectations, set high standards, encourage maximum effort, provide prompt feedback, demonstrate respect for diverse talents and ways of learning, and provide students with challenging and creative work that is central to their learning.
- Provide a curriculum that aligns with our mission and the needs of our region.
- Assess student learning through outcomes-based indicators that relate to clear program and course objectives.
- Create a more diverse faculty to ensure that our students learn from faculty who reflect a breadth of experiences and perspectives.
- Reflect in measurable ways the full breadth of our teaching, research and public engagement mission in the goals of each academic unit, in ways that are consistent with unit expertise and disciplinary focus.
- Promote areas of academic and research excellence that fit with our mission, build on our strengths and align with the needs of our region.



- Expand the honors program to meet the needs of our growing number of high-achieving students.
- Ensure that our library and technology resources are structured and supported to meet the needs of our students and faculty as we continue to grow and expand our programs.

## ENGAGE IN EFFECTIVE REGIONAL STEWARDSHIP

*Northern Kentucky University is vital to the economic and social progress of this region. To support our region, particularly the six focal areas of Vision 2015 – economic competitiveness, educational excellence, livable communities, urban renaissance, effective governance and regional stewardship – we will:*

- Contribute to the realization of Vision 2015 by building faculty/staff capacity and academic programs in needed areas, preparing graduates in disciplines that advance the vision and partnering with various community entities to address regional challenges.
- Deepen our regional commitment to P-12 education, economic development, local government planning, nonprofit capacity building, environmental preservation and enhancement, and healthcare, particularly in ways that complement Vision 2015.
- Encourage and support our region in the development of an international community that attracts, retains and

celebrates people from all regions of the world.

- Assist the region in preparing for the significant growth in the number of older adults by offering academic programs that prepare professionals to work with senior citizens, supporting relevant research and public programs, and offering learning opportunities that serve senior citizens.
- Support excellence across all levels of education – from the preparation of early childhood educators through the development of doctorally prepared education leaders.
- Sponsor programs that inform and encourage public dialogue to address the critical and sometimes controversial issues facing our community, our nation and our world.
- Provide access to the visual and performing arts, giving special attention to reaching those without such access.
- Develop and implement processes to assess the quality and impact of our public engagement and outreach work.

## SUPPORTING PRIORITIES

### RECRUIT AND RETAIN OUTSTANDING FACULTY AND STAFF

*Great universities depend on outstanding faculty and staff committed to the full breadth of the institution's mission. To recruit, retain and nurture outstanding faculty and staff, we will:*

- Create a competitive advantage in the recruitment and retention of a diverse faculty, staff and administration





through exemplary salary and benefits practices.

- Recruit and retain faculty, staff and administrators who have the interest and ability to assure that our full mission is served.
- Serve as a regional model for employee leadership development by implementing an integrated training program in supervision, leadership, career advancement and succession planning.
- Provide faculty and staff with professional development opportunities that are aligned with our strategic priorities, including those targeted at active learning, student engagement, assessment, internationalization and technology-enhanced teaching.
- Offer a full range of SAP-related training and retooling opportunities to improve operational productivity and efficiency.
- Serve as a regional model for our commitment to healthy lifestyles by offering state-of-the-art health and wellness programs.
- Engage in an annual review of benefits that includes such areas as wellness, work-life balance and creative management of benefit dollars.
- Review and adjust staffing levels to address past and future growth and ensure outstanding service.
- Review and adjust faculty workloads and the relative number of tenured and tenure-track faculty, full-time lecturers and part-time adjuncts based upon comprehensive benchmarking, the need to address future and past growth, and the importance of addressing the full breadth of the university's mission and the needs of the region.
- Strengthen our criteria and processes for post-tenure review of faculty to ensure they are clear and consistently applied and promote academic quality and full engagement in the life of the university.
- Develop and implement procedures that allow faculty to periodically shift their teaching, research and public engagement emphases in concert with their department's mission and goals.
- Develop recruitment, performance planning, and evaluation procedures based on the university's strategic priorities and unit goals and objectives.

#### INCREASE PUBLIC AWARENESS OF NKU

*Greater recognition of NKU's strengths and contributions to regional and state goals enhances the university's stature and capacity to serve its mission. To increase public awareness of the university, we will:*



- Implement an effective process for routinely gathering information that is most important to share with our external constituents, such as accomplishments and successes of our students, faculty and graduates.
- Develop a comprehensive strategy to share the university's accomplishments and successes with our external constituents, and do so in a manner that most effectively targets each constituent group.
- Obtain greater visibility for the achievements of students, faculty, staff and the university in general through local, regional and national media outlets and through increased direct written communication addressed to selected constituent groups.
- Expand our paid advertising in written and electronic media.
- Use WNKU and our own television resource – Insight Channel 18 – to promote the university, showcase our achievements and engage faculty in dialogue on important public issues.
- Improve our web presence through the ongoing web rebuild project.
- Encourage greater faculty participation as experts on government and community boards and in public dialogue.
- Increase the number of community and business leaders serving on university advisory boards and participating in academic and co-curricular programs.

- Expand opportunities for community citizens to participate in campus activities and programs.
- Engage an increasing number of alumni in focused efforts designed to promote the university among all external constituents.
- Enhance intercollegiate athletic programs and facilities to strengthen our capacity and ability to engage the community and to help NKU align with other high-quality educational institutions with whom we seek to identify.

#### EXPAND NKU'S FINANCIAL BASE AND CAPITAL ASSETS

*In order for the university to serve a growing student body and meet the expectations set for us by our region and the commonwealth, we need additional resources and more and better facilities. To strengthen and sustain our financial base and capital assets, we will:*

- Develop a long-term university financing strategy to support Vision 2015 goals and our growth to 26,000 students by 2020.
- Seek the investments necessary from the state to support current operations and enrollments, keep college costs affordable for students, support planned enrollment growth and expand regional stewardship responsibilities.
- Increase external grants and contracts, particularly in areas that address regional and state challenges and goals.
- Develop greater private fundraising and donor stewardship



capacity, link fundraising efforts to our strategic, unit, and capital priorities, and ensure that fundraising efforts complement efforts to secure state funding and other sources of revenue.

- Encourage and provide appropriate incentives for faculty and staff to be involved in entrepreneurial activities that are consistent with our mission and create additional revenue streams.
- Update the campus master plan and seek funding for its implementation, placing a high priority on renovating Founders Hall, constructing a health innovation center and other academic facilities, expanding indoor and outdoor recreational space and outdoor athletic facilities, and creating comfortable indoor and outdoor gathering places, ample green space, and attractive walkways.
- Renovate and upgrade faculty offices and public areas.
- Participate actively in the planning of the NKU Foundation development adjacent to The Bank of Kentucky Center to help ensure congruency with the university's architecture and mission.
- Ensure a safe and secure campus environment that fosters university community, student engagement and academic success.

## INCREASE INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

*High-performing, learning organizations set high standards and hold themselves accountable. To improve effectiveness across all dimensions of our work at NKU, we will:*

- Implement a comprehensive performance system that measures, monitors and reports progress toward executing the university's strategic priorities and achieving stated goals and objectives at all levels of the organization.
- Integrate and align planning, budgeting, assessment and accountability processes to support continuous improvement and prudent fiscal stewardship.
- Establish and meet high standards for both quality and efficiency in all dimensions of our work.
- Implement a comprehensive, coordinated enrollment strategy and set five-year and annual enrollment goals for targeted populations and for the university as a whole.
- Increase the capacity and use of our information technology infrastructure to support improved learning outcomes, expanded access to educational programs, effective external communications, increased productivity and data-driven decisions.

- Facilitate efficient and effective decision making at the university by consolidating and standardizing university databases, data collection and data reporting.
- Create a comprehensive, long-term approach to obtaining information and feedback from our stakeholders – such as students, employers and alumni – to improve programs and services.
- Successfully complete the SACS reaffirmation of accreditation process and the development and implementation of the Quality Enhancement Plan.
- Improve internal communications within and across divisions, levels and leadership groups throughout the organization.
- Strive to make NKU a high-performance campus by incorporating sustainability strategies into the following: integrated facilities planning, design, construction and commissioning; energy generation and management; indoor environmental quality; and transportation alternatives.

ambitious, they are achievable through strong campus-wide leadership and commitment, coupled with steadfast advocacy and support from our government, civic and business leaders. If we are successful, it will mean not only an exciting new era in the life of our university but also an exciting new era in regional progress with the university positioned as a primary driving force. The stakes are high; the rewards are great; and we have no time to lose!

Over the next five years, we intend to advance each of these priorities in a focused and disciplined way. While the 2007-2012 priorities are





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NORTHERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY'S 2007-2012 STRATEGIC PLAN  
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