

## Comments from Open Forum #10: Our Collective Future - Alumni.

What are we doing well to serve post traditional students; what can we do better?

- NKU champions among certain populations like the veterans. Word has gotten out in the community that NKU is veteran friendly.
- One thing is to have partnerships with the junior colleges. When I was in Cincinnati State, I saw a lot of programs that transferred to UC. We should have a seamless process for transfer students.
- (GM) Our largest number of transfer students comes from Cincinnati State. In fact, it's higher than all KCTCS transfers combined.
- Some are legacy students. My mother was an NKU graduate and my sister. Affordability was important. Scholarships are important for families with legacy. I would love for more of my family to come here. I suggest a family legacy pricing option.
- How do our numbers compare to other institutions?
- (GM) We are at or above all other Kentucky institutions in the number of post traditional students we are serving.
- The NKU marketing campaign last fall was outstanding. It made me proud that I am an alumnus.
- Are we seeing a retention issue or is attracting more nontraditional students the issue?
- (GM) Both. We will talk about retention in a moment.
- I think we have always been serving nontraditional students well. We have had flexibility for when courses are offered and we used to watch courses on TV. There's probably more tension with serving both traditional and nontraditional students because of our history of doing well. Our flexibility has given us a good edge to serving both.

Should NKU do more to attract out-of-state students?

- Yes; they bring in more money, more tuition, more exposure.
- (GM) The issue is that we would need more housing.
- Is it a profit or loss for housing?
- (GM) It's a breakeven.
- Do they become residents of our area after graduation?
- (GM) I don't think we know that in-depth.
- Who lives on campus?
- All grade levels live on campus. My dorm was supposed to be a freshman building, but it's not now. All grades are represented in the dorms across campus.
- There is a rule that if you don't live within a 30 mile radius you have to live on campus.

- Private builders seem to want to build everywhere. Could we get someone to build here?
- (GM) A couple of apartment complexes near the campus are 50-60% NKU students. UK is privatizing their housing. UK is leasing the land for 75 years to private investors who will tear down the old dorms and build new ones and lease them out.
- Could we look at partnering with private entities on US 27 to do construction to provide store front and recreational activities? Seems like a concept that dovetails with what we need.
- (GM) OSU has done that. New storefronts on ground floor and residential space above. We will be going out soon for a RFI, asking investors how much would they want to develop on the property we have close to the main road. We will retain ownership of the land. It may be a creative way to expand housing on campus or near campus.
- It would be a good idea to have a hotel or residences across from the Bank of Kentucky Center, close to where games are going on.
- Next year Meadowview is only going to rent to students.
- How many students live on campus?
- (GM) We have a small percentage, about 15%, living on campus, and we need to decide if we want to expand.
- Students who live on campus are more engaged, and they become more engaged as alumni.

Has anyone ever taken online courses and what do you think about them?

- I am currently taking two online courses. It depends on the professor, but I think online courses are comparable to on-campus courses. I think they do a good job, but it matters a lot that you are able to do things yourself when you are in an online course; must be self-disciplined. My professors are available by email and were responsive.
- I am completing a master's degree. I took a few online courses as an undergraduate. I am impressed with the continuous improvements that have been made to the Blackboard system. Blackboard has tons of different tools to enhance the experience. Online courses do demand more time, and you don't have reminders. NKU does a great job with them, and it keeps getting better.
- Some curriculum and academic programs lend themselves to online while others don't.
- (GM) What we see developing are that competitive forces push institutions to get online, such as with the nursing degree. There are a large number of them online. Some of it is responding to the market rather than because online is a better way to present the content and skills. Have you heard about MOOCs which are offered by prestigious/elite institutions online for free?

- As a contrary to this trend, some businesses like Yahoo and Best Buy are pulling people back to the office rather than having them work from home.
- (GM) Yes, there's value in putting people together.
- Collaboration is a big piece of that (bringing people together in one location). The mixture of diversity, older/younger students – I think that is a positive thing. They teach each other something. I think we should build more beds and bring them here.
- It's like the internships and co-ops we use to produce graduates that meet the needs of the community. An "array of certificates" may not do that.
- I agree that we need to meet the need and demands of the market. Keeping in mind that my mom was a nontraditional student, online courses would have been great for her to be able to do a class when she put the kids down for a nap. A virtual classroom would have been a great benefit.
- (GM) We will need to decide if we want to be flexible in accepting credit for some of the courses that students have taken through MOOCs.
- I know an individual who worked his way up the company, and when he got to a certain level, they told him that he needed to take a two-week course from Harvard. Will we do that (offer short-term courses/programs)?
- Offerings like that are changing graduate programs.
- What are the demographics of the students who take online courses?
- (GM) It's a little of everything. We know that even some residential students take online courses. They find that it helps give them flexibility in their schedules.
- When online MBA programs and the University of Phoenix started, people were concerned about them (the quality), but now these programs are considered valuable, acceptable at companies/businesses across the nation. I have three children at home. It will be difficult to send all three to college. We need to do something about the rising cost of education.
- (GM) Has anyone heard of Straighterline? Like Phoenix they are all online, but focused on general education courses.

Should we do more with graduate programs? Are there certain graduate programs you would suggest we add that we do not currently offer?

- I went straight from undergraduate to graduate school; education has changed so much in the last 15 years, but I feel that there are not a lot of courses that I can take to stay current in my field. I would love to see NKU have more postgraduate courses.
- I suggested adding undergraduate and graduate engineering programs.
- (GM) Engineering is an expensive program; it usually runs in the red. We also have to think do we want to be complementary or competitive.

- That seems counterintuitive to what you hear in the news. If you want a lucrative career, everyone says get an engineering degree.
- We must offer programs in a cost effective manner. You would want to look at threats in the environment; those threats may outweigh opportunities. Maybe it's a math problem.
- From an officer level at the university, is there a way for the executive level to be comfortable with the notion of being selective with what programs are offered?
- (GM) On my listening tour around campus last fall, I heard a lot of people saying that we can't continue trying to be all things to all people.

Kentucky does not have a formula funding model. There's a perception that the cost of higher education has gone up. Tuition has increased, but it has only replaced the loss of state funding. Overall average spending per student nationwide has actually declined in inflation-adjusted dollars.

- If you were to get an increase in state funding, would you lower tuition or do something else with it?
- (GM) We would have lots of options if that happened. We could limit tuition increases and/or make new investments, such as hire more full-time faculty. Over 65% of our general education courses are taught by part-time faculty.

What does public engagement mean to you?

- Look at past alumni and what they are doing and engage them in continuous support.
- Being responsive to the needs of the community.
- (GM) Faculty, staff, and students engage in service and applied research. Broadly, we define public engagement to include engaging students in learning opportunities in the community.
- Do we do a good job of impressing upon students before they graduate about giving back to the institution? If you don't make an impression on them when they are here, you never will.
- How do you measure public engagement?
- (GM) You can measure student hours and outcomes, but more difficult to measure our impact with public engagement on the community. An example is the 505 project.
- 505 refers to a zip code in Newport which has light industrial and mixed residential. Faculty are working with different projects with that community. There are a couple dozen faculty involved.
- I teach a PR writing class. In our 505 project, students were assigned to write different stories about Newport and these stories will be sent to an online newspaper for publication. Students in a photo class came to take pictures to go with the stories.

- We are taught to be volunteers as a student. It is an ingrained lesson, but then we don't get them engaged with the Alumni on campus. We should be mentoring potential graduates. This needs to be nurtured.

#### Student Success

- Does this (retention/graduation numbers) include pre-pharmacy?
- (GM) Yes, we have a subpar first year retention rate. However, of the 33% that don't return after the first year, we have found that 18% are transferring to another 4-year institution.
- In the past, the attrition problem was related to the secondary schools failure and students need for remedial courses.
- Are we capturing data around why they are leaving?
- (GM) There are lots of reasons and we are working on better understanding them.

#### What are other factors that you see impeding student success?

- Some students want to go away to college, but parents aren't sure they are ready, so they send their children here for a year to prove themselves capable before they go somewhere else.
- Is there a direct correlation with funding?
- (GM) No, there's no state performance funding right now. Another threat is the possibility of federal funding being linked to academic success, not just at the individual student level, but also to the institution level.
- What kind of retention programs do we have?
- (GM) Advising, tutoring, orientation, the new Student Success Center.
- I am in a sorority, and we have funded scholarships. However, funds are not as available for the second, third, and fourth year as they are for freshmen year. That can be a barrier for students. We (sorority) don't like it either, to be giving away \$10,000 and find that the student is not there in college two years later. Is there something we can do to give multi-year scholarships?
- (GM) The university does award some scholarships over multiple years as long as requirements are being met.

#### What is the reputation of NKU?

- Fundamentally, NKU was non-existent in the past. When the women won the Division II title, there was a big difference. That was the first increase in when people started talking to me about NKU. (in Butler County, Ohio)

- In the last 10 years, NKU has been more actively involved in the community. It's not just a commuter college anymore.
- As the campus has grown, there have been lots of changes which has suddenly sparked interest from others.
- We are a relatively young institution. The undergraduates from the past are now retiring and hiring behind them. We are just now getting to be where multi-generations have come through the university.
- When I graduated, NKU had a great work ethic. When I started hiring others, I turned to NKU graduates because they have a great work ethic. More top executives are now NKU graduates, and we will be players in the game.
- I hear every day in the news who we are playing. Athletics has driven awareness.
- Don't forget the publicity that the Bank of Kentucky Center brings to us. That put us on the radar screen. If we could have something at the BOK center all the time, that's a great opportunity for us. I didn't see facilities in your questions on the slides.
- (GM) Yes, and the College of Informatics and theater productions bring people on campus. There is also a difference in perceptions of parents and the potential students' perceptions of NKU.
- We have to sell the parents to come back and see NKU now. It's not the same that it was back when they were here. That is important.
- An alumni center would continuously engage the alumni and bring them back to campus. This room (SU104) is challenging to book anymore.
- People made note that at homecoming nothing was said about alumni. They weren't even asked to stand.
- There's a difference between how the parents view NKU versus the students.
- (Concerning the slide with "best value") If you had phrased it as "return on investment" rather than "best value," I would have selected it.