



# Executive Overview Report

## Master Plan 2009

Northern Kentucky University



### A Guide to a

### Residential, Student Focused Learning Community

Prepared by

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*This Executive Overview summarizes key recommendations of the 2009 Master Plan. A technical report has also been prepared which provides greater detail and the foundation upon which these recommendations are based.*

## A. Campus Profile

Northern Kentucky University is located in Highland Heights on 404 acres of rolling terrain about seven miles south of downtown Cincinnati. NKU benefits from its metropolitan backdrop, which provides all the advantages of a thriving urban setting and a personal feel of a campus a fraction of its size. NKU enrolls students from 47 states and 53 countries. Currently, NKU has 68 bachelor's degree programs, 6 associate, 17 graduate and 1 doctorate program.

In 2008, the university completed a major construction phase, with occupancy of the \$37 million, 144,000-square-foot student union building; The Bank of Kentucky Center, a \$60 million, 9,400-seat arena for basketball games and other events; the transformation of a 150,000 square foot former nursing home into the largest residence hall (461beds) on campus; and, a third major parking structure.

This rate of growth is likely to continue as a number of new buildings and facilities are currently in design. The University has funding for construction of the Center for Informatics building (112,000 square feet) which defines the new west quad. A new Soccer Stadium will be completed in 2009. Capital priorities for the 2010-2012 funding cycle include a major renovation to Founders Hall, construction of the Health Innovations Center, and a new building for the Haile/US Bank College of Business. The university has long embraced a priority for energy conservation and sustainable practices. As an early signatory to the President's Climate Commitment, NKU is actively pursuing sustainable initiatives, including building to LEED standards on all future buildings and pursuing a LEED silver rating for the new Center for Informatics, which is currently under design.



Campus Map 2009

In 2007, the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education completed the Facility Condition Assessment and Space Adequacy Study, which recommends that NKU nearly double its enrollment and add the facilities needed to support this level of growth by 2020. As a result, this master planning effort places emphasis on growth with enhancement of the campus.

## Statistical Summary 2008

Campus Size (acres) 404  
Existing Gross Square Feet 3,200,000

Population  
Full time equivalent (FTE) campus population 13,524  
FTE faculty and staff 1,704  
Student head count 15,109  
Full Time Equivalent students 11,820

University Housing (beds) 1,849

Parking  
Parking spaces 8,240  
Deck spaces (3 decks) 1,796  
Surface spaces (37 lots) 6,444

Student Profile:  
60% first generation college graduates  
90% work: 66% more than half time  
44% on campus less than 4 hours/week  
55% traditional age  
61% women  
67% graduate in less than 6 years  
82% of campus population drives alone to campus  
3% use public transportation



Looking North from Johns Hill Road

## B. Campus Master Plan



The master plan continues the university's tradition of long range planning maintained since the campus' inception. It is a comprehensive vision of the campus projected twenty years into the future. It reflects the priorities and collective thinking of campus leadership and the NKU faculty, staff,

and students working closely with a four firm consulting team. The 2009 Master Plan is comprised of two separate reports. This report deals with physical land use patterns. Under separate cover, the Master Plan Technical Report provides a more comprehensive framework for master plan recommendations.

The drawings shown in this report represent illustrations of the basic principles as applied to a specific set of physical conditions as they exist today. As the plan is implemented over time, conditions will change and the drawings will need to be adjusted accordingly. We cannot, for example, know the exact size, shape and character of future buildings because the program has not been developed, the budget has not been set, and the architect has not been retained. Yet we show building shapes on the plan which will undoubtedly have to be adjusted once the building is designed. However, the basic principles underlying the building location and placement on the site, access to the site, relationship to the pedestrian circulation system, will not change. For that reason, these principles are of vital importance to the long term viability of the plan. They are the elements against which to measure "consistency with the plan" rather than the specifics of the plan drawings. They should be thoroughly understood and committed to by those involved with the physical development of the campus.

The following master plan illustration is a graphic interpretation of the concepts upon which the master plan is based. It attempts to blend the past with the present, and places a strong emphasis on the institution's view of the future. These concepts, which are listed on the following pages, jointly define a comprehensive and far reaching institutional image. To achieve these institutional goals will require a commitment by the university leadership, as well as the understanding and support of its planning staff and the campus community. The plan does not solve all future problems, but it does provide a framework or a way of thinking about the future in terms of the elements and relationships the campus holds dear. There are difficult decisions ahead. By utilizing these materials effectively and making the tough decisions, the Master Plan Goals can be realized and the proposed physical transformation of the campus can be achieved.



Looking Southeast



NKU Master Plan Illustration 2009

	Existing	Proposed
Academic		
Residential		
Garage		

## 1. Master Plan Goals

Working closely with the faculty, staff and students of NKU and the committees appointed to guide this study, a set of goals were identified. These statements describe the outcomes and general results which the university desires in terms of long range campus development. The institution's success in achieving these goals will be an effective measure of the success of this plan.

- *Create a setting which reflects campus priorities and a commitment to students, faculty and staff*
- *Define a methodology for accommodating growth in a manner which reinforces institutional values*
- *Create a compact, well organized, and accessible campus*
- *Define a vision that demonstrates excellence*
- *Achieve a student friendly environment that instills pride in NKU*
- *Communicate a vision which conveys a distinct and humane campus comprised of memorable campus places*
- *Achieve a sense of community within the campus, the surrounding area, and the region*
- *Create a sustainable campus which reflects the highest standards of excellence*
- *Work with the City to achieve a mutually satisfying and supportive living and working environment*
- *Serve the people of the Commonwealth*

In order to accomplish these goals, a series of implementation strategies has been developed which not only propose solutions to current issues, but also suggest policies for directing the long term evolution of the campus. These strategies will make it possible to achieve and preserve the best possible physical environment - one which is responsive to user needs, aesthetically pleasing, and visually distinctive. The following planning principles are the major components of the long term strategy.



Town Hall Review Session

## 2. Planning Principles and Recommendations

The heart of any well conceived master plan is the basic set of principles upon which the overall planning strategy and specific recommendations are based. It is these principles, if carefully and realistically applied, that will give the plan the ability to maintain its relevancy over the extended period of time. At the same time, the planning principles must incorporate the flexibility necessary to allow them to adjust to the inevitable changes which will occur in the higher education environment.

Planning Principles define the basic strategies which need to be employed in order to produce the desired results. They describe physical facilities and/or relationships which typically include building placement and massing, pedestrian circulation and open spaces, vehicular circulation, parking, and utilities. Examples might be "site buildings to enclose and define outdoor spaces" or "create a system of continuous pedestrian walkways which connect major campus destinations such as buildings, open spaces, parking facilities, recreation areas."



Looking Southwest

## Land Use Patterns

1. *Implement a comprehensive and integrated approach which defines building, open space and pedestrian circulation, transportation, parking and utility patterns.*

Each system is self sufficient yet supportive of the other systems. In combination, they form a "Composite Master Plan" which is both comprehensive and definitive. Each project should be designed as a harmonious entity of the campus. They should not be designed as isolated, unrelated elements in space.



Support Facilities

- Parking Garages
- Surface Lots
- Shuttle Surface

2. *Concentrate academic and other student intensive facilities within the academic core. Locate support services on the peripheral edge.*

Support functions (on preceding page) include:

- Parking
- Residential
- Recreation
- Athletics
- Interfaith Village
- Maintenance and Storage and Shops

3. *Extend the academic core by positioning building clusters at locations which directly relate to existing core buildings and the proposed open space and pedestrian systems. Use these clusters to create neighborhoods or districts with their own identifies.*



4. *Utilize building sites to their optimal potential and achieve a concentrated campus core by first using renovation, then infill, and finally building sites along the outer edges of the core.*

Achieve an attractively scaled campus by creating a concentrated academic core and modest walking distances. Minimize utility and environmental impacts by constructing future buildings at an average of 4 levels above grade.



Looking Northwest to Nunn Hall

5. *Achieve the space targets defined in the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education 2007 Facility Condition Assessment and Space Study by adding 2.1 million gross square feet of new development.*

- Existing Space 3,200,000 gross square feet

- Capacity distribution:

W West	403,000 gsf (19%)
N North	245,000 gsf (11%)
NE Northeast	348,000 gsf (16%)
E East	390,000 gsf (18%)
S South	462,000 gsf (21%)
SC South Campus	315,000 gsf (15%)



Academic Core Expansion

6. *Become a residential campus by increasing the availability of beds, and creating on-campus residential neighborhoods.*

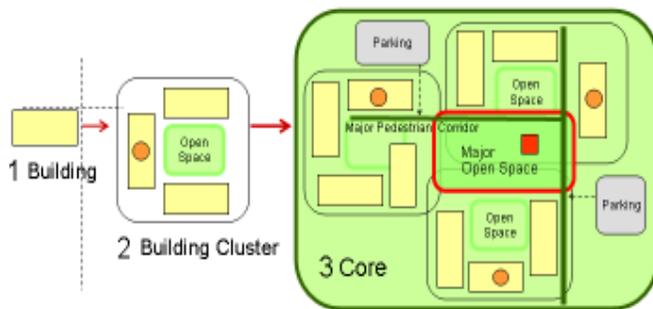
- Distribute housing across the campus in three villages.
  - North Village
  - South Village
  - East Village
- Add 2,147 additional beds in order to achieve a total of 4,000 beds

7. *Explore commercial and residential development opportunities with city and private developers.*

Work to achieve a significant campus town which is appealing to students along the US 27 corridor.

Building Placement

8. *Use buildings to define open space, create clusters of related facilities, and contribute to the campus identity.*
9. *Utilize the proposed building clusters to form districts or neighborhoods which join with the adjoining academic buildings to form an expanded Academic Core*



Use Building Placement to Define Space

Open Space

10. *Recognize open space as a critical element in communicating campus character and achieving distinctiveness.*

With more than half of all learning occurring outside the classroom, outdoor spaces need to reflect the academic mission, campus priorities and concern for the student.

- Continue to upgrade focal spaces (Central Plaza and Loch Norse), which serve as important campus-wide attractions and organizing elements.
- Utilize quadrangles as a way of organizing future development and create separate, yet related academic districts.



Major Open Spaces

- Major Quadrangle
- Secondary Quadrangles

11. *Integrate open space into the campus fabric, particularly in newer areas of campus, in order to humanize the campus, stimulate interaction and strengthen the institutional image.*

Utilize the full range of campus open spaces to create a comprehensive system:

- Major campus wide open spaces serve as primary image markers and frequently become sacred spaces and campus symbols. The Central Plaza and Loch Norse are such places. These places need to reflect the highest quality.
- Quadrangle spaces give identify to a cluster of buildings and help distinguish that area of the campus. This pattern is the key organizational element utilized in the plan for accommodating new buildings.
- Recreation/athletic fields and related facilities represent an area of significant need not only in terms of meeting future needs, but also in response to current needs. A new athletic and recreation complex is proposed northeast of the existing campus.
- Linear walk corridors contained within linear park-like settings assist in making these routes attractive and visually distinctive. The existing "walk of honor" (parallels Business – Education - Psychology Building) is such a corridor. One major north/south corridor and two important east/west corridors are proposed.



- Campus arrivals and entries are important places that warrant special treatment.
- Honors Woods is recognized as a unique environmental area. It is designated as a preservation area.
- Setbacks/buffers serve as visual transitions and assist in screening the more utilitarian portions of the campus.



Open Space Elements

Natural Areas	1	Arrivals & Entrances	○
Buffers/Setbacks	2	Athletic Fields	○
Stormwater Areas	●	Recreation Fields	○

Pedestrian Circulation

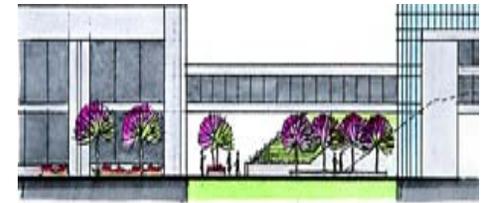
12. Give structure to the campus by using major pedestrian corridors to connect academic areas, open spaces and other important on and off campus destinations.

Extending across the campus, these corridors are distinguished by their connections to major destinations, their width, and special treatments - paving, seating, signage, lighting, and landscaping.



Pedestrian Corridors  
 — Major Corridor  
 — Secondary Corridor

13. Create an interior walk system utilizing elevated and enclosed building connections, and extra wide interior corridors along connecting routes.



14. Enhance campus safety, wayfinding, and access by separating automobile, pedestrian, and bicycle traffic. Accommodate access by the disabled.

Kenton Drive is removed on the north, an elevated walkway is proposed over Johns Hill Road, parking garages are sited on the campus perimeter, and well illuminated major pedestrian corridors are extended across the entire campus.



Arrivals and Entries

- Arrival
- Major Entries
- Secondary Entries

## Vehicular Circulation

15. *Achieve a simple, direct and easily understood road network which includes the creation of a perimeter loop road comprised of the new Connector Road and upgraded segments of Johns Hill Road and University Drive.*

Rename roads surrounding the campus to reflect their relationship with the university.

16. *Maintain a balance between parking demand and availability by providing surface and garage facilities contiguous to the core. Use buses to service the remote shuttle lot, located at the North Athletic Area.*

- Locate parking garages on the edge of the core
- Major destinations should be within a 10 minute walk
- Visitor parking should be within a 5 minute walk
- Parking for the disabled must provide direct access



17. *Encourage alternative modes of travel by providing preferential opportunities for those who do so.*

Alternative modes of travel which should be encouraged include:

- Car pooling
- Bicycling
- Travel by foot
- Transit
- Satellite parking



18. *Encourage bicycle use by developing a system of bike paths that connect important academic and community destinations.*

- The academic core is accessed from a 1.3 mile long loop path which passes along the edge of the core
- Multiple routes radiate from the core



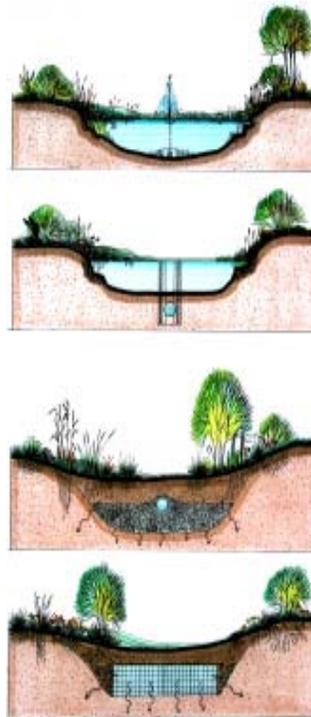
Bicycle Plan

## Sustainability

19. Incorporate "Sustainability" into campus planning and project design – protect sensitive habitat and environmental areas, implement stormwater management concepts, and utilize environmentally appropriate design and construction techniques.

Apply the following guidelines:

- Achieve appropriate development density to use limited land efficiently and to avoid sprawl.
- Recognize and utilize the land to strengthen the natural systems
- Implement sustainability practices – rain gardens, green roofs, and LEED certification
- Use natural areas and future ponds as ecology classrooms
- Protect mature trees and promote major natural areas
- Create major buffer areas around the edges of campus
- Develop walking paths in the woods (e.g. behind Honors House)
- Make the campus more park-like
- Reduce paving and increase permeable green space
- Implement an aggressive recycling program



Retention Options

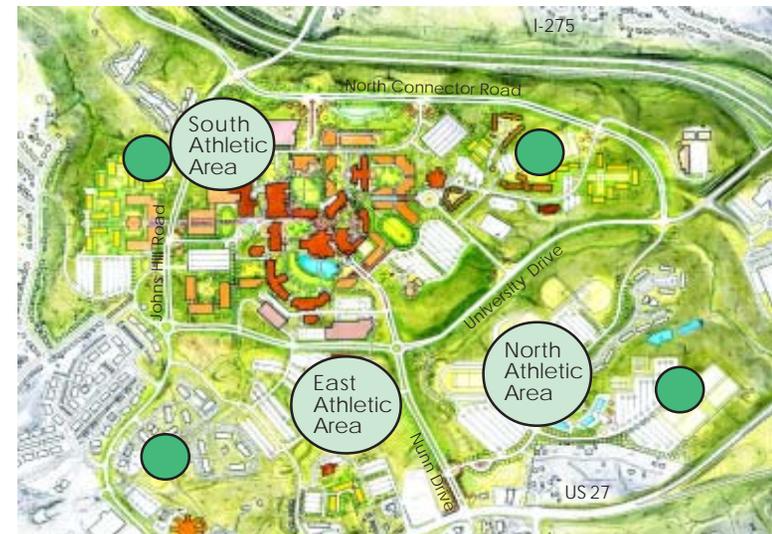
## Athletics and Recreation

20. Concentrate athletic and recreational facilities that are accessible by foot to have a minimal impact on surrounding neighborhoods.



The campus is significantly deficient in athletic and recreational facilities.

- Create three (3) major athletic centers
- Recreation facilities are proposed at North Village, the South Campus, and the North Athletic Area
- Place some recreation facilities contiguous to housing
- Place important spectator related athletic facilities on the edge of campus for ease of off-campus access



Athletic and Recreation Areas

- Athletic Areas
- Recreation Areas

- A comprehensive study previously identified a list of needed facilities, which have all been included in this planning effort. The following are identified on the drawing below.

- 1 Baseball stadium
- 2 Multiple use fields
- 3 Soccer stadium/practice fields
- 4 Softball
- 5 Swimming facilities
- 6 Indoor/outdoor tennis courts
- 7 Outdoor track and field stadium

- Basketball and sand volleyball courts plus multiple use fields are located at the residential villages



Athletic and Recreation Facility Locations

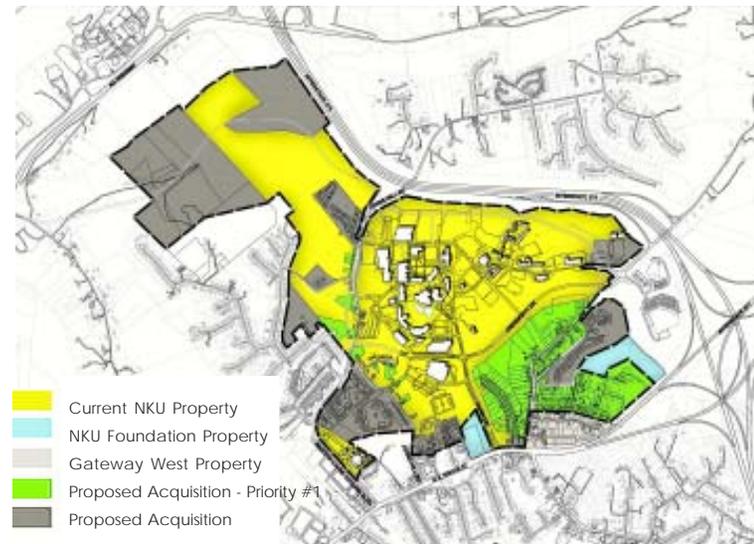
## Acquisition Plan

21. Prepare for nearly doubling the enrollment at NKU by defining a carefully conceived strategy for acquiring the property needed to accommodate this growth.

- Significant acquisition is needed if the campus is to achieve the goals identified by the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education. The largest of these is located northeast of Nunn Drive at the Faren and Sunset residential area.



- The university will continue its commitment to the community by sharing a comprehensive acquisition plan that identifies a phased approach to acquiring land.
- The institution will utilize state approved acquisition procedures.



## Utilities Needs

### 21. Implement strategies for insuring infrastructure availability in terms of production and distribution.

#### Production

- Develop a production strategy for serving 2.1 million additional gsf of buildings plus 960,000 gsf of new housing
- Plan for expansion of utility corridors into currently undeveloped areas by identifying corridor extensions needed to meet future demands
- High Pressure Steam - has more than adequate capacity to meet the space demands identified in the master plan
- Chilled Water
  - Capacity is consumed with the completion of the Informatics Building
  - A new chiller plant is recommended south of the Albright Health Center
- Electrical - additional distribution loops will be required as the campus core expands
- Natural Gas - when a new chilled water plant is built on the southwest side of campus, the existing gas main will need to be extended
- Domestic water - due to limited pressure, the university will want to connect to the existing NKWD water main at Nunn Drive and US 27

#### Distribution

- Steam distribution system will need a number of additional loops in order to reduce peak usage in any particular line



Utility Distribution



### C. Central Plaza Design

The Central Plaza is a large, somewhat irregularly shaped open space located at the center of the academic core. It is surrounded by some of the most important buildings on the university campus including the library and the Student Union. These powerful concrete buildings enclose and give spatial definition to the plaza. The surface treatment of the plaza is predominantly concrete which echoes the material of the surrounding buildings. Such an important campus open space should be a symbol of the University – alive with student and faculty activity, a place of beauty featuring carefully detailed design and elements, graceful trees, refined plantings, pedestrian friendly amenities, sophisticated site elements such as benches, lighting, signage, and focal elements such as sculpture, fountains or a campanile. It

should be a point of pride for the entire campus and a symbol of the University itself. It should be a place where students want to be, to gather and to interact.

The existing NKU Central Plaza does not meet these expectations. The difficulty lies primarily with the surface treatment, the lack of elements to entice the eye and the color needed to make this an exciting space. The concrete paving is harsh and lacks human scale, there is insufficient landscaping and plant material, amenities are lacking and the design treatment in general is not what one would expect of such an important and symbolic campus open space.



Looking West to the Central Plaza



Looking South along Central Plaza

Revitalize the plaza  
 Create activity centers  
 Green the space  
 Attract the students  
 Achieve a place marker

Looking South along Central Plaza

- |                           |                      |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| 1 North Lawn              | 5 Fountain and Pools |
| 2 Sculpture Garden        | 6 Bell Tower Plaza   |
| 3 Activity Plaza          | 7 Speaker's Place    |
| 4 Library Plaza and Kiosk | 8 South Lawn         |

In order to correct the existing problems and help the plaza achieve its maximum potential as the major iconic, interactive, student friendly campus open space, the master plan proposes a comprehensive renovation of the Central Plaza. The proposed plan proposes the creation of three different activity centers within the redeveloped plaza.



Current Conditions



Central Plaza Design Plan

The Tower Area is located at the center of the overall space. It is conceived of as the focal element of the plaza where larger, more organized gatherings will take place. It is also the central crossroad of pedestrian movements through the plaza. As such, it retains a significant amount of hard surface area, but the harsh monolithic concrete is to be replaced with more human scaled and colorful unit pavers. The Tower Area is also proposed to be the location of two special place markers – a bell tower and a water feature which will help to add beauty, identity and focus to the overall plaza.



Bell Tower Area Detail Plan

The South Area adjacent to the Student Union, University Center, Nunn Hall, and the Fine Arts Building contains the existing south lawn with large canopy trees which are retained, enhanced and expanded in the proposed concept. The walkways are adjusted to accommodate changes in student movements which took place as a result of the opening of the new Student Union. Conversation pockets with comfortable seating are proposed along the edges of the lawn and at the terminus of the elevated walkway near the University Center. Like the North Area, this portion of the plaza will be less formal in character and more hospitable to casual interaction and less organized activities.



Site Furnishings

There is no quicker and more cost-effective way to make a major improvement to the image of a campus than to implement a major open space improvement such as the central plaza renovation. For a fraction of the cost of a new building, it is possible to create a dramatically improved campus environment which will be viewed with pride and used and appreciated by students, faculty, staff and visitors to the campus. It will enhance student life, increase campus sustainability, improve campus aesthetics, foster a balance between landscape and buildings in the core of the campus and create a dramatic and lasting symbol of the university, which will be cherished and admired by students, faculty, staff, alumni and the citizens of the Commonwealth of Kentucky.



Looking West to South Lawn



South Area

The North Area adjacent to the Steely Library, Founders Hall, Natural Science and Landrum will undergo significant change as substantial areas of concrete are removed to create a large area of lawn and trees which will incorporate the smaller existing landscape pockets. Several smaller sitting areas and activity centers will be developed in areas such as the library plaza and events plaza and a new sculpture garden will be created north of the library. The expanded tree and lawn area will provide a less formal character to the North Area conducive to more informal activities as well as enhancing the aesthetic and environmental qualities of the area.



Central Plaza Looking North



Looking South through the Sculpture Garden



Central Plaza Looking North



Looking Southwest to Nunn Hall and Future North Lawn

## D. Acknowledgements

This is an exciting time at NKU. The future is both bright and challenging. While this planning effort provides the rationale and conceptual framework for achieving this objective, its ultimate success will depend upon its people: its institutional leadership, the campus community, alumni and supporters as well as the surrounding residents working in tandem with the Commonwealth.



This is the university's plan. It is the result of an unusually interactive planning process which brought many interested parties to the table to consider, to debate, to struggle and to dream. While special recognition is due many, those listed were particularly helpful.

Particularly noteworthy have been the efforts of Ken Ramey, Larry Blake and Mary Paula Schuh, who have committed two years of their careers to this planning effort. Their institutional knowledge, skill and commitment is reflected by the endless time and considerable energy they have invested.

Appreciation is due President Votruba who demonstrated a willingness to consider new ideas and directions. While change is always difficult, particularly at public institutions, dynamic leadership permeates all levels and makes looking to the future an exciting and interactive experience.

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