

**2013 State of the University Address
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Kennesaw State University
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Good morning, everyone, and welcome to the 2013 State of the University address. Thank you for being here this morning to discuss the state of Kennesaw State University. Despite continuing challenges, I believe that the state of Kennesaw State, in a word, is “excellent.”

Even so, we are at a key juncture for the university. We are beginning our second half-century, facing new accreditation processes, obtaining greater national recognition, continuing personnel changes, implementing a new strategic plan, acquiring new facilities and infrastructure, and initiating new programs and activities to help KSU heighten its reputation and visibility. We also have our challenges. My remarks this morning focus on each of these eight areas.

I will begin with our fiftieth anniversary. Obviously, KSU today is a major institution, a community of almost 30,000

students, faculty, and staff. As many as 50,000 alumni live within 40 miles of campus. According to UGA's Selig Center for Economic Growth, our overall economic impact is almost \$900 million. But it hasn't always been this way.

What is today Kennesaw State University began as Kennesaw Junior College, chartered on October 9, 1963. KJC had zero students, zero faculty, zero staff, and zero facilities. We have come a long way in 50 years.

Thus, it is fitting that we commemorate October 7 to 12, 2013, as Founders' Week. During this week, we will feature a series of events including symposia, lectures, concerts, and two ground-breakings of new facilities and infrastructure ... more on that later. For now, I would like each of you to make sure that Founders' Week is on your calendar.

Our Fiftieth Anniversary celebration will not end with Founders' Week. Rather, our celebration will be multi-year. After Kennesaw Junior College was chartered, classes for its 1,014 students and 37 faculty members began in September

1966 at what is today Southern Polytechnic State University. Kennesaw Junior held its first classes here in January 1967 when its first three buildings were completed. KJC's first five graduates received associate degrees on June 9, 1967. All of these events are appropriate to celebrate as well.

Events for our Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration, beginning with those during the October 7-12 Founders' Week, will be planned by the recently appointed 33 person Fiftieth Anniversary Committee, which has representatives from all sectors of campus, alumni, trustees, and community supporters. This committee will soon swing into high gear.

The committee is headed by a four-person "Working Chair" group of four recently retired, or soon-to-retire, long-time members of the KSU community who together have given nearly 160 years of service to this institution. Retired Vice President for Student Success Nancy King heads the Working Chairs. She is joined by Terry Arnold, representing the staff; Tom Keene, representing the faculty; and Joe Meeks, representing the Deans.

My second topic this morning addresses three accreditation and policy process issues that are critically important. I am pleased to say that I believe all three are being well handled.

Leading the list is our Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Five-Year Interim Report, submitted last month by KSU's Office of Institutional Accreditation. This report is the result of over a year's work by many people, including many of you. Leigh Funk and Susan Paraska led this effort, ably assisted by Kevin Gwaltney. This Interim Report is as important as the once-every-ten-year SACS re-accreditation.

I am highly confident that SAC's will favorably review the report. If SACS requires additional material, we have until September to respond. I deeply appreciate the assistance of everyone who helped with this report. I know it has been a burden, but in this era of accountability, we have no choice.

Related to this, in Spring 2011, I appointed an ad hoc team of three recent past chairs of the University Council, Kevin Gwaltney, Randy Stuart, and Chris Ziegler, to review KSU's handbooks and catalogs to assure they were up-to-date and

not internally contradictory. The Handbook Project Team also reviewed the Policy Portal to make recommendations regarding its content and functionality.

Last spring, the Handbook Project Team presented its recommendations to KSU’s shared governance senates and councils regarding modifying the handbooks’ structures. The shared governance senates and councils approved the recommendations unanimously. Thus, we now have three separate handbooks: 1) the University Handbook, with information and policies that apply to all constituencies; 2) the Employee Handbook, with information that pertains to all KSU employees; and 3) the Faculty Handbook, with information that pertains to faculty.

Still related to accreditation and policy processes, our Quality Enhancement Plan, or QEP, “Global Learning for Engaged Citizenship,” was reviewed in 2010 by SACS and found to be “exceptional and highly commendable.” I am pleased to report that the QEP, which remains a central part of accreditation, has continued to forge forward, with at least five major successes this year.

For example, the 2012 Open Doors Report on International Education, published by the Institute of International Education and the U.S. Department of State, ranked KSU eighth among the nation's master's degree-granting institutions in the number of students who studied abroad. Including for-credit, service, non-credit, and continuing education programs, nearly 1,100 KSU students studied abroad in 2011, with 734 in for-credit programs.

Similarly, we once again had an excellent “Year of” program, this time focusing on Ghana. In addition to weekly programs presenting various facets of the history, politics, people, economics, and society of Ghana, KSU is also working with several Ghanaian universities to pursue funding to improve STEM education in West Africa.

At the same time, for 15 years, KSU has offered study abroad programs in Montepulciano, Italy. This year, the university and the town council of Montepulciano signed an agreement assuring KSU's use of the fortezza, an ancient fortress being renovated for the study abroad program. This is KSU's first official overseas campus.

Equally notable, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research CIFAL Atlanta moved its headquarters to KSU. Together, CIFAL Atlanta and KSU will provide joint training programs for governments in STEM education, economic development, and inclusive technologies.

And finally, KSU's Confucius Institute was named a 2012 "Confucius Institute of the Year," an honor bestowed to a select group of Chinese language and culture centers operating worldwide. KSU's Confucius Institute was one of 26 institutes around the world that received the award, and one of only seven American Confucius Institutes so honored.

Beyond things international, as my third major area for discussion, we have many other accomplishments about which to be proud. I'll begin with students.

First, Jiexi Liao, a junior bio-chemistry major, last month became KSU's first Goldwater Scholar. Among the most prestigious national honors, Goldwater Scholarships are awarded to outstanding students who intend to pursue careers in science, math, and engineering. Jiexi certainly fits this description. A past President's Emerging Global

Scholar, Jiexi has a 4.0 GPA and spent last summer at MIT doing research on magnetic materials. Winning a Goldwater is a tremendous honor both for Jiexi and KSU.

Sentinel Editor-in-Chief Megan Emory also garnered a national award, honored last month by the National College Media Association, which named Megan the “Student Media Leader of the Year” for her work on the Sentinel. Megan is majoring in communication with a concentration in public relations, minoring in marketing, and graduating in July.

The third “student” is actually a group of students, the KSU Mock Trial team, which next week will travel to Washington to the National Mock Trial Association Championships. The field began with 530 teams, but only 48 make it to the finals.

No other team from Georgia is left in the championship.

The team is captained by political science major Misty Gann and includes Travis Bain, Eric Butler, B.J. Moates, Zack Moore, Tora Norwood, Brandi Sluss, and Kevin Weehunt.

KSU and its colleges, faculty, and staff also received other

acclaim this year. For example, according to the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, Kennesaw State is one of only 21 colleges and universities in the U.S. that warrants an “A” for its core curriculum in a nationwide study on general education. This is the third year that the Council conducted its study, and the third year that KSU earned an “A.”

Schools received grades ranging from “A” to “F” based on how many of seven core subjects they require: composition, U.S. government or history, economics, literature, math, natural or physical science, and foreign language. “A” schools require a course in at least six out of the seven areas.

The Commission for Commuter Students and Adult Learners has also named KSU’s Adult Learner Program as an "Outstanding Adult Learner Program." The award recognizes the quality of Kennesaw State’s innovative programs and services for nontraditional students.

Meanwhile, in the College of Science and Math, the SAS Corporation at its 2012 Global Forum recognized Jennifer Priestley as its 2012 Distinguished Professor for her efforts

in educating and preparing students for careers in applied analytics. In addition, this Friday, KSU will host its sixth SAS “Reverse Job Fair” in which representatives from major companies will meet students and view poster presentations of the projects they create using SAS.

The College of the Arts also recently appointed two artists in residence. The first is Tony Award and Drama Desk Award winning actor Shuler Hensley, a Marietta resident, and the second is John Driskell Hopkins, the Zac Brown Band’s bassist, who joined the Joel Katz Music and Entertainment Business program.

It has also been a banner year for University College. Ten years in a row, U.S. New and World Report has selected the college’s First Year Experience program as one of the best in the country. Similarly, the College’s Thrive Program, designed to help HOPE-eligible students maintain their GPAs and retain their scholarships, received the Grand Gold award from NASPA: Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education. In addition, Associate Dean Keisha

Hoerrner was named one of the 10 Outstanding First-Year Student Advocates for 2013 by the National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition.

The Coles College's National Collegiate Sales Competition also had a stellar year. This year, the fifteenth National Collegiate Sales Competition attracted 67 college and university teams, including one from Canada and one from Belgium. The competition had 54 corporate sponsors.

The Coles College was also recognized by U.S. News and World Report, which listed the Coles College's part-time MBA program as the 25th best such program in the U.S.

The Bagwell College of Education, the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, and the WellStar College of Health and Human Services have also had active and productive years. For example, among the many activities in the Bagwell College, the College submitted 17 major programs to SACS for substantive change in which several majors were created from one major. Meanwhile, in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, the Center for Sustainable Journalism moved to new quarters and succeeded once again in

attracting significant sponsored funding from the Harnisch Foundation. And as in years past, the WellStar College of Health and Human Service led the state both in the number of nurses that it graduated, and in having its graduates pass the NCLEX certification test.

Our two other colleges, the Graduate College and the College of Continuing and Professional Education, also are making major contributions to the success of KSU. Last year, KSU broke the \$10 million barrier in external research grants, and once again, the College of Continuing and Professional Education taught over 20,000 students. If one combines KSU's almost 25,000 for-credit students with the 20,000 Con-Ed students, this university helped educate 45,000 students this year.

Outside academics, Auxiliary Services and Operations also have won recognition. The Commons was named one of the top three food programs for sustainability education by the National Association of College and Food Services. Equally impressive, Commons Director and Chef de Cuisine Gary

Coltek is one of three finalists for the National Restaurant Association's Innovation in Sustainability award.

Meanwhile, the Technology Association of Georgia took note of KSU's Information Technology Services Department by awarding it TAG's Grand Prize for Mobile Applications for its campus directory mobile website. The mobile website allows anyone with Internet access anywhere in the world to quickly locate faculty and staff name and contact details.

The fourth general area I'll comment on this morning are senior personnel changes that have occurred or soon will occur. Four of KSU's nine colleges are headed by or soon will be headed by new deans. Three deans are completing their first year of "deanly" service to KSU, Mark Anderson in Science and Math; Robin Dorff in Humanities and Social Sciences; and Kat Schwaig in the Coles College of Business, who was previously Interim Dean. And we will soon also have a new dean in the College of the Arts.

I'd like to thank Joe Meeks for his years of service to KSU, and also Ivan Pulinkala who stepped into the breach as Interim Dean when Joe retired. Thank you, Joe and Ivan!

The Cabinet also added two new members this year. Eric Malewski became KSU's Chief Diversity Officer last fall, taking over for Linda Lyons, who was Interim CDO for two years. Thank you, Linda! Our second new Cabinet member is Maureen McCarthy, from the Department of Psychology, who is completing her first year as Faculty Executive Assistant to the President. Maureen succeeds Jorge Perez, who completed his three years of service as FEA last year.

At this juncture, I'd like to recognize Jorge, who was named an American Council on Education fellow last month. The American Council on Education is the premier coordinating body for over 4,000 U.S. institutions of higher education. Each year, it awards only about 50 ACE fellowships. This is a signal achievement for Jorge. Congratulations, Jorge!

Meanwhile, the state of Indiana has been particularly good to KSU this year. In addition to Eric Malewski, who joined us from Purdue, the new Executive Director of the Institute for Global Initiatives, Lance Askildson, will soon join us from Notre Dame. I'd also like to thank Barry Morris for his service over the last two years as Interim Director of IGI.

Other important transitions are also occurring. In Athletics, after a stellar 27-year career as head softball coach, Scott Whitlock is stepping down at the end of this season. During his coaching career, Scott garnered 13 regional crowns and two national championships. After he retires as head coach, Scott will remain with KSU as Senior Associate Athletics Director. For the 2013 season, Wes Holly is serving as co-head coach. Next year, Wes will step in as head coach.

We will also experience a change in leadership of the KSU Athletics Board. For the past six years, Tom Keene has chaired the Athletics Board, the responsibilities of which are to assure institutional control of Athletics, maintain academic integrity of Athletics' policies and practices, and

ensure compliance with NCAA policies and rules. With Tom retiring this summer, Dr. Rick Franza of the Coles College will become Athletics Board Chairperson.

We also have a new Director of Auxiliary Services and Programs, Randy Shelton, who last fall joined the KSU team from Northeastern State University in Oklahoma. As Director of Auxiliary Services and Programs, Randy's responsibilities are to provide oversight, management and direction to the KSU Bookstore, the Card Services Center, Copy and Print Services, Culinary and Hospitality Services, and the Department of Parking and Transportation.

One final leadership transition must also be highlighted. For the last five years, Norman Radow has chaired the KSU Foundation. During Norm's tenure as chair, the KSU Foundation, among other things, helped the university add 2,000 residence hall beds, built the Sports and Recreation Park, and opened the Commons, our Student Culinary Center. Thank you, Norman, for all you have done, including endowing a lecture series to honor your parents.

Norman's successor is Ms. Connie Engel, who became Foundation Chairperson earlier this academic year. Connie has already presided over several steps forward for KSU and the Foundation including working with the Regents to develop a single integrated marketing plan for KSU's 3,500 residence hall beds and finalizing a partnership with Fifth Third Bank. Thank you, Connie, for what you have already done for the university and for what you will do!

The fifth area I will discuss is our new Strategic Plan. The product of two years of work by the Strategic Thinking and Planning Committee and strengthened by thousands of survey responses from KSU students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community supporters, the 2012-17 Strategic Plan has been guiding efforts to improve KSU since last fall.

With five goals subdivided into 20 objectives and 60 action steps, the Plan is too comprehensive to discuss in detail. However, I will comment on each of its five goals. Actions are already underway toward achieving each goal.

Goal One, to “promote excellence and innovation in education through teaching, supervising, and mentoring students; research, creative activity, and scholarship; and professional service,” is the reason that Kennesaw State exists. The action steps associated with this goal, ranging from “increasing support and reassignment incentives for faculty involved in technology-enhanced education” to “initiating or enhancing at least 3 programs per year that support economic development,” are intended to move KSU to the forefront of higher educational excellence.

Goal Two is also straightforward, stating KSU will “improve recruitment, retention, progression, and graduation rates in accord with the Complete College Georgia initiative, while continually increasing the quality, breadth, and relevance of academic and co-curricular programs.”

As you may recall, Governor Deal launched Complete College Georgia, CCG for short, last year. CCG includes every University System institution and every college in the

Technical College System. It is strongly supported by the Board of Regents of the University System.

CCG has four inter-related objectives: 1) to raise the percentage of Georgians who have college degrees from 42% to 60% by 2020; 2) to improve the quality of higher education even as the percentage of people with college degrees increases; 3) to require each institution to develop a data-driven graduation target and achievement plan; and 4) to tie college completion to economic development.

Our Strategic Plan's Goal 2 is directly aligned with the Governor's and the Regents' strategic objective of increasing the number and percentage of Georgians who graduate as the quality of public higher education in Georgia improves.

But what about specifics? The answer to this is that we are moving in the right direction, but we still have a way to go.

For example, in 2008-09, the six-year graduation rate for first-time full-time freshmen who entered KSU in Fall 2002 was 35%. Three years later, in 2011-12, we graduated 41% of the freshmen who started at KSU in Fall 2005. This was an impressive improvement of 6% in only three years.

But we must do even better. The reality is that four other USG comprehensive universities whose entering freshman class is similar to ours graduate a higher percentage of students in six years than we do. Thus, we must move forward with those action steps under Goal 2 to improve our graduation rate, including improving academic and co-curricular student engagement programs; expanding interventions to improve retention, progression, and graduation rates; and creating an honors college.

At the same time, we will do this keeping in mind Complete College Georgia's second point, that the quality of higher education must improve as graduation rates increase. There will be no decline in quality at KSU as we strive for higher graduation rates in accord with Complete College Georgia.

Strategic Plan Goal 3, to “Become more engaged and prominent in the local community, Georgia, the nation, and the world,” is also critical. At the outset, let me stress that KSU and its students, faculty, staff, and alumni are already extensively engaged in activities that connect this university and its people to wider external communities. Many of you responded to a recent survey about the extent to which you are engaged with external communities. The results clearly show that the KSU community is deeply engaged externally. The problem is that many people in the external world are not aware of the extent of this engagement.

The problem here is simple, namely, that too many members of wider communities of which we are parts are too little aware of the extent to which KSU and its people contribute to their vitality and success. Simply said, we must do a better job of packaging, promoting, and marketing what KSU and its people do in external communities. This is the key thrust of Strategic Plan Goal 3.

For the past two years, an Engage KSU Leadership Team of

LeeAnn Lands, Keisha Hoerrner, Arjan Raven, Lynn Boettler, Anne Hicks-Coolick, Sylvia Inman, Diana Gregory, Brian Wooten, Michael Sanseviro, Pam Hubby, Jorge Perez, and Maureen McCarthy has been debating, discussing, and developing approaches to move KSU toward this goal.

As a result of their deliberations, earlier this year, we began an internal search for an Executive Director of Community Engagement. We hope to have this position filled by this summer. The person who fills this post will have as his or her responsibility the combination of better packaging, promoting, and marketing what the KSU community already does in the broader world, and identifying ways in which the KSU community can do more.

This initiative extends beyond recognition. It is based on the belief that as more and more people learn about and understand everything that KSU and its people do, they in turn will provide additional support to the university.

Engage KSU is about responding to larger communities, and simultaneously providing KSU with an opportunity to build stronger synergistic connections to external communities.

Goal Four is to “enhance the collegiate experience, and foster a welcoming, diverse, and inclusive environment.”

The logic behind this goal is anchored in two different areas.

First, many studies show that key factors in attracting, retaining, and graduating students are broad-based college experiences. We intend to provide students enhanced opportunities to have such experiences by providing first-rate services, first-rate residence life experiences, and first-rate co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.

Second, we will foster a welcoming, diverse, and inclusive environment. It is in such an environment that learning can best occur. As importantly, it is simply the right thing to do.

Goal Five, to “expand resources, and improve operational efficiency and effectiveness,” focuses on the materials that help us better achieve the first four goals. It focuses on the need to increase resources from state and non-state supporters, enhance our facilities and infrastructure, and better and more wisely use the resources and facilities that we already have.

Here, it is important that last week, the Georgia General Assembly finalized the state's FY14 budget, which provides the University System as a whole an increase of \$63 million in formula funds. The Regents will determine how much of an increase each USG institution will receive at their board meeting in Savannah next week. The Board will also set FY14 tuition rates at the Savannah meeting.

As for new facilities and infrastructure, we continue to make progress. Seven KSU projects have been completed, begun, or approved this year. It is an impressive list.

First, in addition to new formula funds for the University System, the General Assembly last week also approved \$4.4 million in bonds for renovations to the Sturgis Library. This follows a \$1 million renovation project that created a graduate library on the Sturgis Library's third floor and a \$300 thousand renovation to create a book repository.

While we still need more library space, in three years we will have devoted almost \$6 million to improving the library.

We also have recently opened or begun construction on three new academic buildings. Last fall, we opened the \$21 million, 73,000 square foot Science Laboratory building, with six teaching labs, 17 research labs, and an open-air atrium. The new Laboratory Building enabled the College of Science and Math to move forward with two new master's degree programs, in Chemical Sciences and Integrative Biology, as the college steadily raises its research profile.

Also last fall, we began constructing the Zuckerman Art Museum, named in honor of Bernard Zuckerman, who provided \$2 million for the \$3 million project. Other major donors include the Robert W. Woodruff Foundation and the Leo Delle Lassiter Jolley Foundation. This 9,200-square-foot museum will house KSU's art collection and serve as a cultural and teaching resource on contemporary art.

We also recently began construction of the \$20 million Bagwell College of Education Building Expansion. This building will provide much-needed classroom and office space for the Bagwell College of Education. The Bagwell

College graduates more teachers than any other teacher education program in the state, and according to many reports from K-12 superintendents, they are also the best.

We also opened University Place II this year, a state-of-the-art 451-bed residence hall that brings the total number of beds on campus to almost 3,500. While it is perhaps hard to believe that only ten years ago KSU was not a residential campus, it is undeniable that having students living on campus has totally transformed the nature of this university.

Next, we will also soon begin building the Dr. Betty L. Siegel Student Activity & Recreation Center, a \$39 million, 176,000 square foot project that will be a world-class recreational facility. Plans call for indoor and outdoor pools, an outdoor and four indoor basketball courts, a multi-activity court large enough for soccer, eight tennis courts, a weight and fitness area, a rock-climbing wall, an indoor track, a wellness center, and sand volleyball and racquetball courts.

And just last week, Governor Deal, the Georgia Department of Transportation, and the Cobb County Department of Transportation approved yet another project that will have an immense impact on KSU, the Skip Spann Connector.

Named after former KSU fundraiser and Town Center Community Improvement Director Skip Spann, this \$20 million project will create another entrance to and exit from campus by building an overpass of I-75. The connector will leave campus near the East Deck, connecting Frey Road on the west of I-75 with Busbee Parkway on the east of I-75. Construction will start this year and take two years. In conjunction with the Big Shanty Connector, which opened last year, the Skip Spann Connector will greatly reduce traffic tie-ups on Chastain Road. We owe a debt of gratitude to Governor Deal and the Georgia and Cobb County Departments of Transportation for making this happen.

I would be remiss if I did not include in this address four sets of new activities that have potential to help raise KSU to another new level. I have already referenced one set, the

new masters degrees in integrative biology and chemical sciences, which have potential to catapult the College of Science and Math to new heights.

Similarly, in the WellStar College of Health and Human Services, a new KSU Bachelor of Science degree in Culinary Sustainability and Hospitality is on the agenda for approval by the Regents at their Board meeting next week. This too has potential to launch the university into new areas that will greatly benefit society, the university, and students.

Meanwhile, Night Owl Productions, our new student-centered production company, has already run a major concert by American Idol winner Philip Phillips in KSU's Fifth Third Stadium. Nearly 5,000 people attended the concert. A music festival under the direction of Night Owl Productions is expected to attract as many as 25,000 people to the Sports and Recreation Park on Saturday, April 20.

And finally, of course, there is football. With the Board of Regents approving football at its February meeting and with

our hiring Brian Bohannon as KSU's first football coach, we are preparing for our first football game in 2015. I assure you, with Coach Bohannon's background as a coach at the Naval Academy and Georgia Tech, he knows how to do football right. Our football student-athletes, like all student athletes at KSU (the combined grade point average of KSU student-athletes is over 3.0), will be both students and athletes. We also deeply appreciate Fifth Third Bank's support of our athletics program, which allowed us to go forward both with football and with the future addition of more women's intercollegiate athletic teams at KSU. Obviously, there is much about which to be optimistic at KSU. However, we also have challenges. Our budget remains tight as the state and country struggle to emerge from the recession. For five years, the state has provided no funds designated for salary increases. We must find more funds for scholarships for students in need. We must graduate a higher percentage of our students as we further improve quality. These are all challenges that must be addressed and overcome.

Similarly, recent alterations to the HOPE scholarship, changes to the missions of technical colleges and two-year USG institutions, the expansion of on-line programs at for-profit universities, and the emergence of massive open on-line courses could become challenges to KSU unless we respond wisely and well. And I am convinced we will.

At the same time, at least for the next couple of years, local traffic patterns and congestion will continue to make access to and egress from campus difficult during peak travel times. However, as mentioned, the construction of the Skip Spann Connector should soon alleviate this problem.

Despite these challenges, I am convinced that as we begin our second half-century, the state of Kennesaw State is excellent. We have responded well to new accreditation processes. We are obtaining greater national recognition. We continue to retain and attract top-flight personnel. Our strategic plan is in place and aligned with state priorities. We are acquiring more facilities and infrastructure. We are initiating new programs and activities that will help KSU improve its quality, heighten its reputation, and improve its

visibility. These are all grounds on which to conclude that the state of Kennesaw State is excellent.

Thank you for your attention this morning, and for all that you do for KSU and our students. I look forward to continuing to work with you.