

**Student Senate Social Mobility Ad Hoc Committee
Final Report and Recommendations**



April 2020

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A special thank you to Dr. Joseph Erba for reviewing and proposing edits on the report. An additional thank you to all campus partners who agreed to speak with us as we did our research, as listed in the 'List of Interviewees' section.

Executive Summary

The Student Senate Social Mobility Ad Hoc Committee intends this report to be as comprehensive an audit as we could write regarding the status of social mobility and the retention of socioeconomically disadvantaged students at the University of Kansas. Our intent was not only to establish where the University stood on social mobility, but to suggest ways we can constructively move forward.

With this, we humbly recognize that there will be knowledge gaps in this report. A group of roughly 10 students consistently convened to assemble this report, and almost all of us work jobs with upwards of 20-30 hours a week while also enrolled in 12-15 credit hours at KU. Additionally, the effects of COVID-19 had a significant effect on our efforts.

Thus, we seek to create a solid foundation to highlight the issue of social mobility so that we can incorporate actionable items and support from administration as we transition to a period of ‘Strategic Doing’ for the University. In this report, there will be concrete recommendations, but **the most important one is to create a Chancellor’s Task Force to review and act on these suggestions**. Students have led the public charge so far, but we need support from administration, faculty and staff. Seeing how systemically engrained problems of socioeconomic status are, a top-down solution is needed. Students need to have a major role and voice in this proposed Task Force, but we first need a fully committed partner from administration to send a strong message to the university community of the importance addressing this issue. For years we have seen the effects of a disjointed and delegated effort; a successful effort permeates all levels of the University.

This report seeks to prove not only that there is significant work to do at the University, but also that there are clear paths to make campus more inclusive for all students. A campus that seeks to make a difference in the world must first start within its own confines. As we see student retention at the University stay consistently high, we see the retention of Pell Grant students trail 15 percentage points behind, representing a significant gap of continued access. In an environment of decreasing student enrollment, an institution must make every effort to retain each student and at this moment KU is not adequately serving students from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds.

We ask for the Task Force because that is how we believe change will occur. We recognize there are financial and organizational implications with every one of our recommendations and we hope the Task Force can investigate each of them thoroughly. While the committee is almost entirely students now, we look forward to having every necessary decision maker in the room to enact meaningful change at the University of Kansas.

In our research on social mobility at the University of Kansas, we sought to identify the issues that affect students of low socioeconomic backgrounds at the University. Throughout this process, we found that average income has been disproportionately increasing as lower income students get squeezed out of the student body for the last 10-15 years. This work is presented in the charts and tables that follow throughout the report, but nowhere in these tables are the hardships that are endured by low socioeconomic status students on a daily basis. We did find

that many students find themselves paralyzed by situations such as these and unsure of where to turn; we need to move away from a departmentalized approach and toward a unified University approach.

As listed in the References and List of Interviewees section, the committee spread out to collect research on tactics and to contact all corners of campus on the topic. We spoke to a handful of upper administrators, directors of retention programs, researchers on the topic and other knowledgeable campus sources. Further, we looked to identify peer institutions who were successful in elevating low socioeconomic status students so we could use them as an example for our University.

The Students Behind the Statistics

Below we have included a testimonial from a student who faces the problems which we seek to address in this report with the hope that when recommendations are considered, the people behind stories like this will not be forgotten. The crux of this issue is the impact which it has on students - our peers. This first-hand account was used, with permission, from the presentation given to Student Senate's EOF board by Dr. Peter Ukpokodu.

Hi my name is [holder]. I am classified as a Junior and my current GPA is 2.60. This is my 2nd year at the University of Kansas after being out of school for almost 10 years and was blessed with the opportunity to return to school, but not with financial aid, but through an organization called KC Scholars that helps nontraditional students return with a financial needs based scholarship, but unfortunately it doesn't cover my full tuition. This letter is in reference to the Educational Opportunity Fund and in hopes that I would be considered. My first year back I was so motivated. I am an Edwards student double Majoring in Psychology and African American Studies. My grades were great and I was back in the swing of things, but things turned rocky at the beginning of this year.

My home that I was renting went into foreclosure after my landlord was using my rent for other things and not paying the mortgage and my home was also broken into twice in one week. I wanted to make more progress with my degrees so I enrolled in summer courses [and] had to drop all, but one and that left a balance on my account. My plan was to pay that balance, but more life problems came about and this balance has remained unpaid. Life problems from the loss of employment to another robb[ery] at my home (in July) and deductibles needing to be met so I could file claims. After the start of this current semester it seemed that life was back on track and I was catching up financially. I was being proactive by periodically driving for Postmates delivering meals and looking for additional work to stay afloat. I was able to get some of my balance removed, but it is still close to \$2,000.

On October 5th, I was involved in a car accident and I went an entire week before GEICO informed me that it was a total loss (I have attached a letter). I also was shut off by my gas company and fortunately was able to make arrangements with the electric company. Currently I am without a car, but my main focus is my education. Without my degree I feel like I am stuck. Stuck from achieving a goal that I promised my mother before she passed away during my Junior year of High School 15 years ago that I would achieve. Struck from being elevated at

companies I work for or will work for in the future because of certifications and credentials I do not have. And just stuck from continuing my education here at the University of Kansas. I had to drop out before at previous institutions due to financial reasons and illness and I was blessed with a 2nd chance to finish and that's what I am seeking help with.

I would use whatever funds I [sic] would get if I was chosen as a recipient to pay my balance. My enrollment date is 10/26 and right now I have holds and cannot register for classes for Spring. If I get more than the amount needed for my balance then I would put the rest towards essential bills like my utilities.

Recommendations for the Task Force

Charge 1: Before Students Attend the University

Recommendation 1: Expand OPTIONS-style programming

Expand orientation programming to include all at-risk incoming KU students. For students who are not familiar with a typical college experience, establishing a home on campus before classes start is critical. This type of programming should be expanded into an expanded summer orientation for all students, a longer and more engaging process, and/or a more extensive and widely used remote learning program such as DiscoverKU.

Recommendation 2: Campus-wide utilization of the *ku.academicworks.com* scholarship portal

With Endowment's purchase and creation of *ku.academicworks.com*, the University should mandate the centralization of all scholarships into this portal. With a general application and built-in recommended scholarships, both prospective and current students are better able to access resources and apply for them more efficiently.

Recommendation 3: Recalibrate to dynamic admission standards

With the School of Business's switch to a hybrid calculation that deemphasizes ACT and allows for a higher GPA to compensate, the proportion of pre-admits from marginalized backgrounds have greatly increased relative to the overall population. Because of standardized testing's documented biases and relatively uncertain indication of college success, the University should seek a more flexible admission standard.

Recommendation 4: Make transportation more readily accessible

While the University currently services a bus route to JCCC and the Edwards Campus, other routes to Kansas City, KS and Kansas City, MO should be considered to provide equal access to education.

Recommendation 5: Reevaluate recruiting boundaries and tactics

Students have voiced concerns that they felt alienated by lack of connection with recruiters on the basis of identities and backgrounds. By intentionally recruiting students through recruiters of similar backgrounds, we have found that there is more trust and willingness to come to the University. The University should seek to make a more intentional effort in identity-conscious recruiting.

Recommendation 6: Support students just outside of Pell range

While students might receive decreased federal help, their financial troubles often mirror those of students in Pell range. Identifying students who need help early, such as Stafford loan recipients, is key to ensuring a well-rounded embrace of social mobility.

Charge 2: Fostering growth while on campus

Recommendation 1: Establish a Centralized Social Mobility Office

Universities who are successful with social mobility are intentional; social mobility needs to be an autonomous unit that seeks to elevate students from marginalized backgrounds. This office would give preexisting units the resources and collaboration necessary to mount a comprehensive social mobility effort.

Recommendation 2: Make an intentional effort toward individualized case management

For students in financial distress, the situation can be debilitating and immobilizing. Having someone experienced to help them through the resources available can be the difference between dropping out and staying until graduation. The University needs to begin heavily investing in personalized case management resources given the current lack of sufficient advisors.

Recommendation 3. Additional funding for more personnel

In addition to increasing the EOF fund for dealing with the current waitlist, the committee also recommends that additional funding be allocated for the acquisition of more personnel within TRIO in the interest of increasing their capacity to serve more students.

Recommendation 4. Increased funding specifically for professional development

Given that professional development is a vital component to social mobility, funding must be provided to give students equitable access to internship opportunities, LSAT prep courses, MCAT prep courses, and any other resources deemed essential to enhancing a student's professional skill set.

Recommendation 5. Yearly Data Reports

Campus entities pertaining to social mobility must give yearly retention and data reports to the relevant offices to accurately monitor progress of students in programs. Not only should programs be mandated to report standardized information, they should also be allocated the resources to do so, given the current need to allot any available money toward programming.

Recommendation 6. Withdrawal Survey

Due to the lack of available data on specific reasons why students are withdrawing from the University, more creative ways should be sought to collect data, whether at withdrawal or identifying reasons for at-risk students.

Recommendation 7. Increase KU Mentoring participation among students.

The University should increase advertising for the mentoring platforms coordinated by the Alumni Association and the KU Faculty Mentor Program in order to increase student engagement with the platforms. Furthermore, programs tailored towards social mobility should look to assign students with a mentor before the semester begins.

Introduction and Overview

Background

In its commitment to enhancing the learning experience of KU students, further the social growth of KU students, and ensuring that learning opportunities are open to students regardless of their socio-economic status, Student Senate passed Bill 2020-302, A RESOLUTION CONCERNING THE STATUS OF LOW INCOME STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS. This resolution was passed during Cycle 3 of the 2019-2020 school year, the night of October 2nd, 2019. Student Senate officially charged the University Affairs committee with creating an Ad Hoc Committee “with the purpose of working towards finding substantive solutions to address this socioeconomic gap on campus.”[2]

Martin Vazquez, a CLAS sophomore, was elected chair, and then led the committee to create charges. The charges were to examine current efforts of the University compared to leading Universities in the field, examine the effect of state policies, research the post-graduation social mobility of Jayhawks and recommend concrete solutions to administration as to how we can proceed.

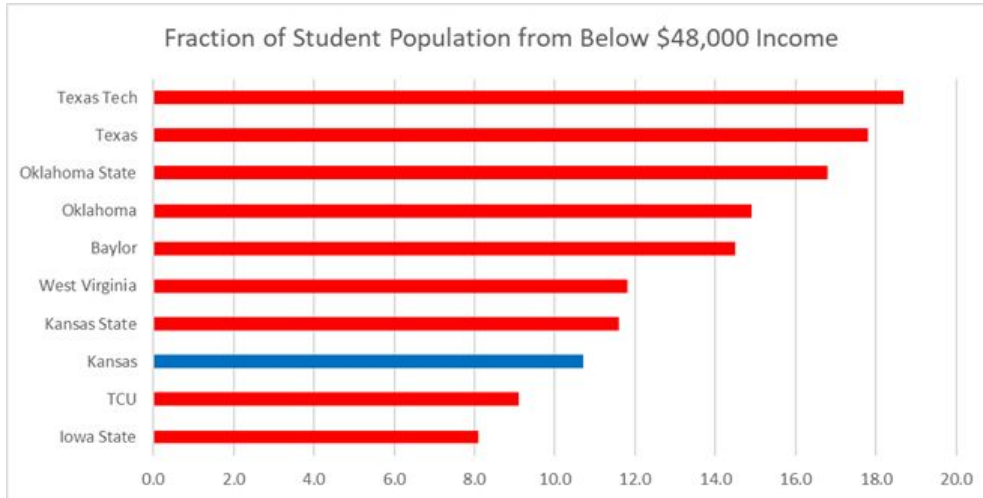
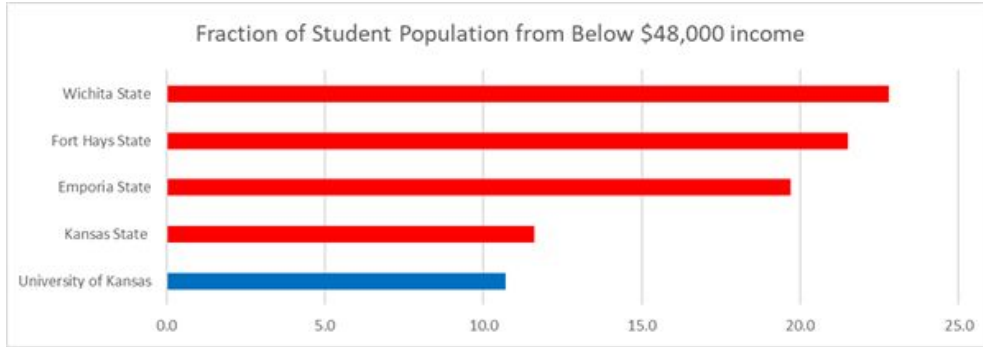
The committee met roughly ten times over its life and members also met with various campus partners to get insight on where the problems lie. The committee prepared its report throughout April with the hope of presenting to the Chancellor and Provost on April 30th at the Student Tuition Advisory Committee, given that committee’s emphasis on Social Mobility at the University.

Access at the University of Kansas

The widely read US News report on top colleges in the United States released a new metric on Social Mobility in September of 2019 (US News 2019). In that ranking which measured the ability to recruit and retain populations of Pell Grant eligible students, the University of Kansas ranked an abysmal 377th out of 381 national universities. Although it instigated concern from Student Senate, the report was not the only motivating factor.

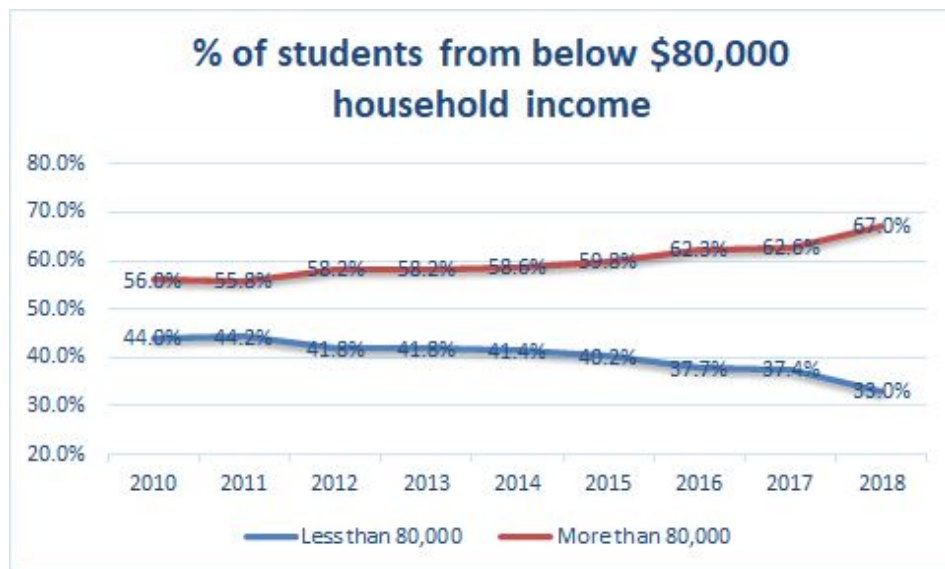
Opportunity Insights, a project dedicated to research Social Mobility, conducted a study of over 2200 colleges and universities, and the results were just as dismal for the University of Kansas. The fraction of students families from the bottom 20% of earners stood at 3.25% of the student population, the lowest of any of the 42 universities or colleges in Kansas. Even more compelling, the fraction of the student population from the top 1% of earners is triple that of any other university in the state, coming in at 3.89% compared to Kansas State’s 1.32% (Opportunity Insights).

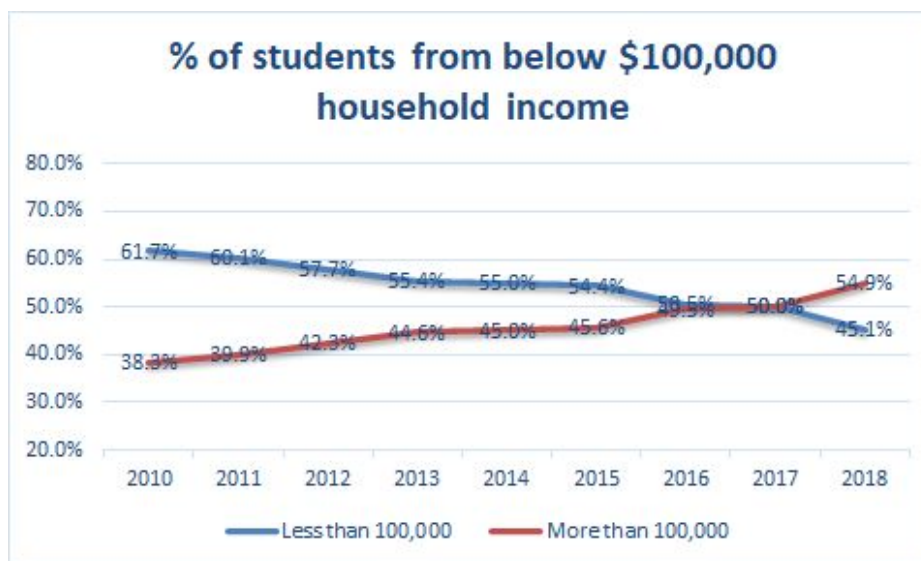
The juxtaposition of the University’s status as an accessible learning institution and its realized accessibility is further highlighted by data from the Social Mobility Index. Per their data, KU trails all KBOR schools and most Big XII and public AAU peer institutions in students from below the national average in household median income.



Data Source: Social Mobility Index 2019, <https://www.socialmobilityindex.org/>

Building on top of this, per KU’s internal data, the problem has been accelerating in the wrong direction for the past decade. Below are two charts that have shown how the family income gap has progressively widened at two different thresholds.





Source: KU Analytics and Institutional Research, Student Tuition Advisory Committee Presentation

Other notable trends in enrollment during that time are both the increased concentration of in-state students from Johnson County and a higher concentration of the student body from out-of-state, both presumably wealthier populations than the rest of the student body.

Proportion of in-state population from specified county

	Fall 2010	Fall 2011	Fall 2012	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019
Johnson	42.1%	42.8%	43.6%	44.4%	44.7%	45.5%	45.9%	46.4%	46.7%	46.9%
Douglas	13.3%	12.7%	12.0%	11.5%	11.3%	11.3%	11.5%	10.4%	10.1%	11.2%
Sedgwick	9.7%	9.7%	9.8%	9.9%	9.9%	10.2%	10.0%	10.2%	10.1%	9.6%
Shawnee	6.2%	6.2%	6.1%	5.8%	5.9%	5.5%	5.4%	5.3%	5.2%	5.3%
Wyandotte	3.3%	3.4%	3.4%	3.5%	4.0%	4.1%	3.9%	4.0%	3.6%	3.5%
Leavenworth	2.7%	2.8%	2.7%	2.7%	2.6%	2.6%	2.6%	2.7%	2.8%	2.7%
Butler	1.3%	1.4%	1.5%	1.6%	1.4%	1.5%	1.5%	1.4%	1.5%	1.4%
Saline	1.2%	1.2%	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%	1.2%	1.2%	1.3%	1.2%
Riley	1.8%	1.7%	1.7%	1.5%	1.5%	1.6%	1.6%	1.1%	1.2%	1.1%
Miami	0.9%	0.9%	1.0%	1.1%	1.1%	0.9%	1.0%	1.0%	1.1%	1.1%
Reno	1.3%	1.3%	1.2%	1.2%	1.2%	1.2%	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%	1.0%
Crawford	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%	0.5%	0.4%	0.5%	0.6%	0.7%

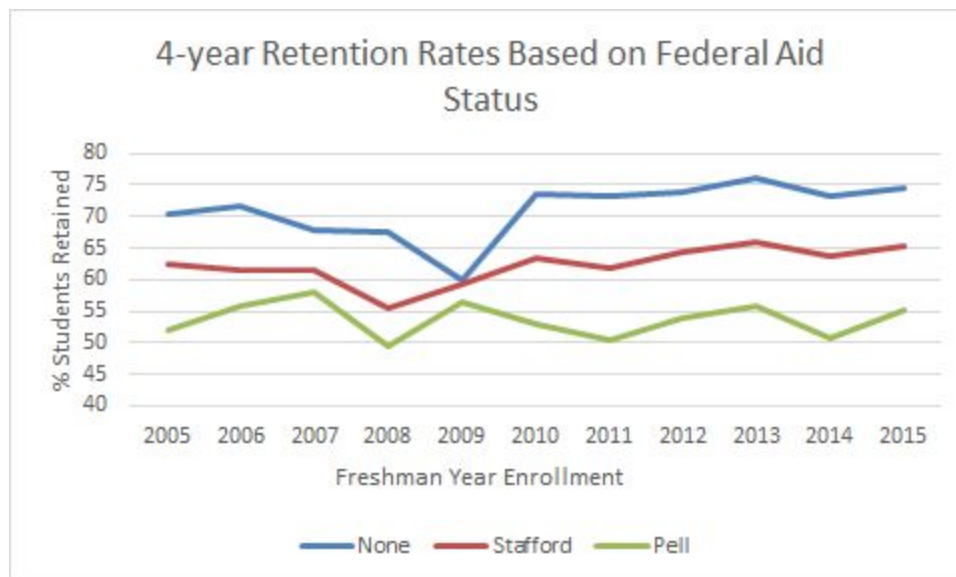
Proportion of student population from specified state

	Fall 2010	Fall 2011	Fall 2012	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019
Kansas	66.8%	64.3%	65.2%	63.7%	62.9%	61.5%	60.1%	59.4%	59.4%	58.5%
International	8.0%	7.9%	8.3%	8.7%	8.8%	9.0%	8.6%	8.2%	8.0%	7.8%
Missouri	6.6%	6.4%	6.6%	6.8%	7.0%	7.1%	7.7%	8.2%	8.6%	9.1%
Illinois	2.8%	2.9%	3.1%	3.3%	3.4%	3.6%	3.8%	4.1%	4.3%	4.5%
Texas	2.5%	2.4%	2.3%	2.4%	2.4%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%	2.6%
California	1.1%	1.3%	1.5%	1.8%	1.9%	2.0%	1.9%	1.9%	1.8%	1.6%
Colorado	1.3%	1.3%	1.1%	1.6%	1.6%	1.8%	1.9%	2.0%	2.0%	1.9%
Minnesota	1.4%	1.5%	1.4%	1.4%	1.4%	1.5%	1.5%	1.6%	1.7%	1.7%
Nebraska	1.2%	1.1%	1.2%	1.2%	1.3%	1.0%	1.6%	1.7%	1.7%	1.8%
Oklahoma	0.9%	0.8%	0.7%	0.8%	0.8%	0.9%	1.0%	1.1%	1.0%	1.1%

Source: KU Analytics and Institutional Research, https://air.ku.edu/interactive_factbook/enrollment

While many of these trends took place over the life of the previous strategic plan, another concerning trend exists. As the plan executed a primary goal of increasing 4-year graduation

rates, there were no relative gains in terms of retaining students with Pell Grants and Stafford loans when compared to students who received no federal assistance.



Source: Analytics and Institutional Research,

https://air.ku.edu/sites/air.ku.edu/files/files/RetentionAndGraduation/Rates/PCT_by_Pell_Stafford.pdf

Implications for lower-socioeconomic status students

For decades, Pell Grants have helped narrow the higher education access gap between low and high socioeconomic status students. However, the real dollar impact has drastically fallen, given Pell Grants now cover just about 29 percent of average costs for students at public four-year colleges which is significantly lower from 1975 when it covered about 79 percent of costs (Protopsaltis & Parrott, 2017). Both the rise in tuition rates and the lack of federal nominal increases to Pell have continually eroded the impact of the program.

On average, Pell students take larger course loads and are less likely to work full-time jobs. This indicates that students who receive the Pell must prioritize their focus on completing their degree and work less. That is an important observation as research suggests that those who work more than 15-20 hours per week and enroll part time are more likely to drop out of college (Protopsaltis & Parrott, 2017).

Furthermore, according to the Protopsaltis and Parrott (2017), research shows that need-based grants enhance a college's accessibility. Below are some key findings about need-based grants:

- A \$1,000 reduction in college costs — through either lower tuition or more grant aid — boosts enrollment by three to five percentage points, with lower-income students being more price sensitive, according to several studies.
- A \$1,000 increase in grant aid improves college retention rates by one to five percentage points, research also shows. Recent studies in Florida and Wisconsin found that a \$1,300 and \$3,500 need-based grant led, respectively, to bachelor's

degree completion gains of 22 percent (over six years) and 29 percent (over four years).

- Pell had a significant effect on college enrollment among older adults, a 2002 study in *The Journal of Human Resources* concluded. In particular, an examination of Current Population Survey microdata found that Pell's introduction in the 1970s increased the probability of enrollment for eligible independent students ages 22 to 35 by 1.3 to 1.5 percentage points (relative growth of 16 percent for men and 40 percent for women), while changes to the definition of independent students in 1986 that restricted eligibility decreased the probability of attending college by about four percentage points for those who lost benefits (as cited in, Protopsaltis & Parrott, 2017).

In addition to increasing access to higher education, research suggests that Pell decreases college drop-out rates and promotes academic success:

- Using student data from Ohio's public institutions, a 2004 National Bureau of Economic Research paper found that a \$1,000 increase in a student's Pell Grant reduced the likelihood that he or she would withdraw by six to nine percentage points, suggesting "strongly that a Pell Grant reduces dropout rates."
- A \$1,000 increase in Pell boosted retention by 1.5 percentage points, according to a 2011 study in *Social Science Quarterly* that used data from the nationally representative Beginning Postsecondary Study (as cited in, Protopsaltis & Parrott, 2017).

Yet, despite Pell's proven success to help students in financial need, Pell's tuition coverage has been severely diminished. Consequently, it is necessary for the University to seek additional methods to help students who are Pell Grant eligible.

Charge 1: Before Students Set Foot on Campus

Introduction

Current research across the nation indicates just how important a sense of belonging and community is for a student to be successful. Studies show that social-class background is strongly related to a sense of belonging in college, which in turn predicts social and academic adjustment to college, quality of experience at college, and academic performance (Ostrove & Long, 2007). Moreover, efforts to exert a sense of belonging ought to be made before and after classes begin and substantial work has already documented practices that promote just that. For instance, Olszewski-Kubilius and Laubscher (1996) found that a summer career and counseling program helped foster positive perceptions of college in economically disadvantaged students. In addition to summer programming for incoming students, studies also show how peer mentoring/counseling programs greatly assist a student's adjustment to their new environment.

It is imperative, then, that the University continues to provide incoming students coming from disadvantaged backgrounds the support they need, particularly before these students begin their classes. The committee's evaluation of the University's effort in this regard shows that there is

much room for improvement. The committee identified both straightforward solutions that can be manageably implemented as well as areas that the University ought to reexamine.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Expand OPTIONS-style programming

Expand orientation programming to include all at-risk incoming KU students. For students who are not familiar with a typical college experience, establishing a home on campus before classes start is critical. This type of programming should be expanded into either an expanded summer orientation or a longer and more engaging process.

The Opening Paths to Individual Opportunity and Success (OPTIONS) program is:

A five-day residential program designed to assist TRIO-eligible incoming freshmen with their transition from high school to KU. As an OPTIONS student, you'll have the opportunity to move into the residence halls five days early and participate in activities designed to connect you with campus organizations and resources prior to the first day of fall classes. (OPTIONS, 2019)

Expanding such programs coupled with implementing more summer-bridge programming will allow for a greater number of students that can participate in the program(s) and produce additional resources over the summer that students can utilize. From then on, it is only logical to expect that the overall number of disadvantaged students retained will increase. We make this conclusion on TRIO's 6-year graduation rate of 65%, which is roughly 15% higher than recent Pell Grant student graduation rates at the University.

Bringing students to campus early for an extended period of time may force them to cut summer employment short. The University should also seek to expand the scope of remote learning opportunities such as DiscoverKU. Due to the optional nature of the course, results still remain minimal, but redesigning the course to cater to at-risk students with compulsory completion can yield positive results (at-risk students are defined by the 1-6 scale on student college-preparedness as laid out by Admissions).

Recommendation 2: Mandatory utilization of the *ku.academicworks.com* scholarship portal

With Endowment's purchase and creation of *ku.academicworks.com*, the University should mandate the centralization of all scholarships into this portal. With a general application and built-in recommended scholarships, both prospective and current students are better able to access resources and apply for them more efficiently.

Campus wide utilization of this scholarship portal will significantly benefit both prospective and current students. For example, it will give students the ability to apply for different scholarships within the same platform, spend less time computing the same information on each application and more time applying for other scholarship opportunities. All of these consequently increase a student's probability of being awarded a scholarship(s).

Recommendation 3: Recalibrate to dynamic admission standards

With the School of Business's switch to a hybrid calculation that deemphasizes ACT and allows for a higher GPA to compensate, the proportion of pre-admits from marginalized backgrounds have greatly increased relative to the overall population. According to Chris Anderson, Associate Dean of the Business School, the new formula for pre-admits, $ACT/10 + GPA \geq 5.5$, has shown early success of pre-admitting a higher proportion of students from marginalized backgrounds.

Because of standardized testing's documented biases and direct correlation with socioeconomic status (Hughey, 2009), a more dynamic approach for overall admissions should be considered on a University-wide basis. Due to recently studied correlations between college success and ACT or High School GPA, GPA is considered to be a better predictor of collegiate success (Allensworth & Clark, 2020). By placing more weight on the GPA in a dynamic model such as the one the business school has implemented, more students are able to distinguish themselves through scholarship and reduce the effect of standardized testing biases.

Recommendation 4: Make transportation more readily accessible

While the University currently services a bus route to JCCC and the Edwards Campus, other routes to Kansas City, KS and Kansas City, MO should be considered to provide equal access to education given that disadvantaged students likely come from these communities. As seen in the chart titled "Proportion of in-state student population from specified county" on page 11, Johnson county has roughly 15 times the student body presence that Wyandotte county has, despite being just 4 times larger in population. We believe that providing more available transportation would narrow this gap.

Given that the cheapest housing facilities like the Scholarship Halls are at max capacity, and Oliver the most affordable dorm being shut down, providing additional transportation services for students will give them the option of staying at home while taking classes on the Lawrence campus. Furthermore, this will supply prospective students from surrounding disadvantaged areas equal opportunity to attend the University; thus, increasing accessibility to KU, as well as increasing the recruitment of low socioeconomic students.

Recommendation 5: Reevaluate recruiting boundaries and tactics

Students have voiced concerns that they felt alienated by lack of connection with recruiters on the basis of identities and backgrounds. Earnestly recruiting from disadvantaged geographies with representatives that share identities with constituents is important. KU Students from Native American backgrounds have consistently reported both discomfort and inability to recruit other Native American students given the perceived status of the recruiter, typifying the disconnect felt by marginalized students in the recruiting process. By intentionally recruiting students with recruiters of similar backgrounds, we have found that there is a heightened sense of trust and willingness to come to the University. The University should seek to make a more intentional effort in identity-conscious recruiting.

Recommendation 6: Recognize students just outside of Pell range

While students might receive decreased federal help, their financial troubles often mirror those of students in Pell range. Identifying students who need help early, such as Stafford loan recipients, is key to ensuring a well-rounded embrace of social mobility.

The bulk of financial assistance at the University targets Pell Grant students; however, it is also of equal importance to attend to the needs of students just outside that range. The committee recommends that the University works to assess those efforts to ensure that it is extending the same amount of attention to those students. Furthermore, it is crucial that the students who have selected to attend KU because of the Pell Grant and other scholarships, and later find themselves no longer eligible, are aware of resources available for them such as the *Special Circumstances Re-evaluation* aid program through Financial Aid and Scholarships.

Applies to: *KU students and families who have experienced a change in financial circumstances that may affect aid eligibility.*

Purpose: *Special Circumstances Re-evaluation refers to the process of reviewing a student's financial aid application when the student and/or the student's parents or spouse experience a change in income or expenses that was not reflected on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). When applying for financial aid, income and asset information is used to determine how much can be contributed toward educational expenses. Re-evaluation is appropriate when changes in income or assets are significant enough to result in increased aid eligibility and the student/parent requests the re-evaluation in writing. (Special Circumstances Re-evaluation, 2008)*

Charge 2: Fostering Growth While on Campus

Introduction

As presently configured, there are programs already in place that aid incoming low socioeconomic students with their adjustment to college. However, as the data suggests, the University's Pell Grant student retention has made no relative gains on the overall student retention rate in the last 15 years. Hence, there must be a reevaluation of the University's current efforts to retain not only Pell Grant students but disadvantaged students in general. The discussion below seeks to outline the research and recommendations concerning the University's role in fostering growth for students on campus.

The different programs that the committee audited fall under the umbrella of OPTIONS such as: TRIO SES/STEM, HawkLink, MSG, Emerging Scholars, and Adidas Scholars. Collaboration already exists to a limited extent between these programs (the existence of the Collective); however, there seems to be a lack of communication between them and the University's administration. Furthermore, administrative offices like Student Money Management, Financial Aid, Housing, and Student Affairs have very limited collaboration.

Moreover, the committee's research of economic literature shows that emergency financial assistance alone *does not* increase retention and graduation rates. Studies done across the nation indicate that programs that not only assist students in financial need but also have extensive case management show an increased likelihood of procuring the graduation of students when

compared to students not involved in such programs. A study done by Catholic Charities Fort Worth (CCFW) and Tarrant County College (TCC) illuminates the necessity of having effective case management in higher education. Details of the study are shown below.

- *Stay the Course*TM(STC) program was designed through a collaboration between Catholic Charities Fort Worth (CCFW) and Tarrant County College (TCC) to address the personal, non-academic, social, and institutional barriers to success for low-income students in college. The program has two key components: full-service, wrap-around case management and access to emergency financial assistance.
- To measure the effectiveness of *Stay the Course*TM, LEO scholars designed a randomized controlled trial evaluation. To be eligible to participate in this study, students need to satisfy a set of enrollment criteria that emphasize feasibility of degree completion (currently enrolled in at least 9 credit hours, a GPA of at least 2.0, degree seeking, meet at least one remedial standard), low-income status, and being at risk of dropping out (excludes those with more than 30 credit hours accumulated thus far).
- Eligible students were randomly assigned to one of three groups: (1) the *Stay the Course* treatment group, which are offered comprehensive case management services as well as access to emergency financial assistance; (2) the emergency financial assistance only group; or (3) the control group, which are not eligible for *Stay the Course* services, but otherwise have full access to any existing college or community services, just as they would in the absence of this intervention. (University of Notre Dame, 2020)

Implications of the study suggest that it is possible to help low-income students persist in college at substantially higher rates with a fairly low cost, but there must be well-designed intervention and dedicated support. *Stay the Course*TM is a model for providing nonacademic supports, such as case management and emergency financial assistance, that improve persistence and completion.

In addition, the committee deemed it necessary to include further information and data on programs comparable to *Stay the Course*TM to corroborate the study conducted by CCFW and TCC. In particular, TRIO, as they were an office eager and willing to work with the committee and provided data.

Background Information on TRIO

- TRIO SES/STEM at KU is one of various federally mandated programs tasked with the job of assisting and providing resources to college students that come from low-socioeconomic backgrounds, are a member of an underrepresented group, are first-gen college students or have a disability.
- The program receives funding from a combination of federal funds from the Department of Education, state government funds and additional funding comes from Student Senate in the form of the EOF fund.

Services offered to students in the program:

- An additional Academic Advisor with flexible hours
- Free tutoring for a major including STEM majors
- Academic resources such as: free printing, calculator and laptop check out
- Networking and career development: social events, graduate school prep, and career development services
- Financial aid Scholarships in the form of the TRIO Grant
- OPTIONS program, a weeklong program before the first week of classes where incoming freshmen who qualify are helped in making their transition to college easier.
 - Eligibility is the same for the TRIO requirements and the program is open to students outside of TRIO SES/STEM
 - Connects students to various departments, faculty and services around campus that will assist them during their time here at KU
 - Students get first pick on some on campus jobs
 - Learn more about the campus by doing a tour/scavenger hunt
 - Meet with professors and departments a week before classes
 - Opportunity to win a \$500 dollar grant

Program Success

According to the data reported by TRIO staff:

- TRIO serves 250 students on campus
- TRIO SES has maintained around 93% of its students from 2017-2019 and TRIO STEM with around 92% from 2017-2019
- Around 93% of TRIO SES students have maintained good academic standing with an average GPA of 2.99
- Around 95% of TRIO STEM students have also maintained good academic standing with an average GPA of 3.08
- Lastly for students who entered the program six years ago, around 65% have graduated, which is 5% higher than KU's average graduation rate.

Students in TRIO feel a sense of community with one another in which, as shown earlier, plays a critical role in student retention. Furthermore, with TRIO, it is evident that students have the support needed in order to be successful. Thus, it is incumbent on the University to explore means of expanding TRIO and other relevant programs if it is truly committed to providing students with sufficient resources that yield student success.

With that said, the committee has put forth recommendations that we believe address certain issues that have been previously expressed, as well as provide both a foundation and solutions to enhance social mobility at the University.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Establish a Centralized Social Mobility Office

Universities who are successful with social mobility are intentional; social mobility needs to be an autonomous unit that seeks to elevate students from marginalized backgrounds. This office would give pre-existing units the resources and collaboration necessary to mount a comprehensive social mobility effort.

Winston-Salem State University (WSSU) consistently ranks as a top performer in social mobility, and President Dr. Elwood L. Robinson says that although the University can't personalize every student's experience, it can make every experience personal. WSSU has achieved this through a variety of different methods; one in particular is by creating a one-stop shop. Dr. Robinson states, "a 'one-stop shop' for student support, mentoring and advising services. [sic] [I]sn't a revolutionary idea, but it is an effective one, especially when academic counselors and professional advisers join forces on behalf of students" (CollegeNET, 2020).

WSSU is not the only university to have such a program. Kansas State University has developed their own "One Stop Shop" that focuses attention on different aspects of student life connecting students to resources relating to the students' academic, personal, and professional goals.

Furthermore, Keely Bielat and Jennifer Yarrish (2009) researched one stop shops for mid-sized universities and found that 90 percent of students had a positive experience with staff; and 95 percent of students favored the new set up over the former decentralized model.

Recommendation 2: Make an intentional effort toward individualized case management

Stress caused by financial uncertainty is oftentimes debilitating and immobilizing for students. Having someone experienced to help them through the resources available can be the difference between dropping out and staying until graduation.

An overwhelming amount of research indicates how paramount case management is to student success, especially for at risk students. Case management is a solution-focused approach to providing students the aid necessary to a wide variety of needs. In order to affect change the University must become proactive, not reactive by means of being concerned with *what is* and *what can be done*, rather than asking *what was* or *what held a student back*; and case management is a proven method of being proactive (National Behavioral Intervention Team Association [NaBITA], American College Counseling Association [ACCA], & Van Brunt, 2012).

Recommendation 3. Additional funding for more personnel

In addition to increasing the EOF fund for dealing with the current waitlist, the committee also recommends that additional funding be allocated for the acquisition of more personnel within TRIO in the interest of increasing their capacity to serve more students. We call on Student Senate next year during the fee review process to increase funding to the EOF and OMA mandatory student fees. While we recognize the shortcomings of this year's approved fee

package, the committee recommends that the Student Senate prioritize the funding of such programs.

Recommendation 4. Increased funding specifically for professional development

Given that professional development is a vital component to social mobility, funding must be provided to give students equitable access to internship opportunities, LSAT prep courses, MCAT prep courses, and any other resources deemed essential to enhancing a student's professional skill set.

Providing students with the resources necessary for enhancing their professional development can be done through a variety of different avenues. Given that the University has existing offices and programs (i.e. TRIO, McNairs Scholars, AAAC, etc.) to do just that, the committee recommends that funding is allocated specifically for the augmentation of professional development through these offices.

Part of this duty falls on the Student Senate to increase total EOF funding. Each year, programs such as McNair scholars show that dollars are being put to work by expanding students' options from just one or two graduate school applications each year to seven or eight. Even then, resources are usurped each year.

Recommendation 5. Yearly Data Reports

Campus entities pertaining to social mobility must give yearly retention and data reports to the relevant offices to accurately monitor progress of students in programs. Not only should programs be mandated to report standardized information, they should also be given allocated dollars and resources to do so, given the current need to allot any available money toward programming.

The committee's effort to assess social mobility at KU was hindered by the lack of available data in relevant areas. In order to accurately gauge which areas of the University are doing well, and where they aren't, greater data collecting must be done. Furthermore, a greater intake of data will allow for the University to evaluate its current standing and will promote initiative to target specific areas in need. We encourage this data to be publicly available on Analytics and Institutional Research's website.

Recommendation 6. Withdrawal Survey

Due to the lack of available data on specific reasons why students are withdrawing from the University, more creative ways should be sought to collect data, whether at withdrawal or identifying reasons for at-risk students.

In addition to increasing data gathering and reporting in offices across campus, it is also necessary to have concrete measures as to why students are withdrawing. Thus, the committee recommends that a survey/questionnaire be implemented to Enroll and Pay before every student enrolls each semester. The questionnaire should ask for their perceived likelihood to leave the University, and then ask for specific reasons as to why they feel that way. These reasons include an inability to pay tuition and/or housing, mental health, and the lack of a sense of belonging.

This survey will supply the University with the needed metrics to analyze why students are leaving. In doing so, the University will have significant data to address the areas that need more attention.

Recommendation 7. Increase KU Mentoring participation among students.

The University should increase advertising for the mentoring platforms coordinated by the Alumni Association and the KU Faculty Mentor Program in order to increase student engagement with the platforms. Furthermore, programs tailored towards social mobility should look to assign students with a mentor before the semester begins.

Connecting students with alumni and faculty augment the opportunities already provided by the University through personal guidance. Furthermore, it will give students more of a unique platform for seeking advice on how to navigate through college life and give them a perspective that may not be offered through our conventional offices.

Summary & Action Plan

Released earlier this year, the new mission statement for the University reads “The mission of the University of Kansas is to lift students and society by educating leaders, building healthy communities, and making discoveries that change the world.” In just the first few phrases, the University recognizes the need to lift students and society, and we as students believe that this mission should start with the students who need it most. For years, students from Pell eligible and other socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds have trailed almost 15 percentage points behind the overall University retention and graduation rates. Despite past efforts to mend this problem, the effort has been largely fruitless with no significant increase in retention.

In the past, the solutions have been delegated to individual units; we see a future with a top down approach that empowers units to prioritize social mobility. In our interviews, it was very apparent that an unfunded mandate would not be attainable for units. Instead, a strategic plan which addresses accessibility for all students is crucial.

We envision a Task Force that convenes in the fall with the goal of tackling social mobility. With the task force authorized this spring, filled throughout the summer and through the first week of classes, and convening in the fall, administrators can ideally act on a recommendation that is produced before the 2020 winter break.

While the budget is undoubtedly tight for the next few years, our goal is for this report to begin the vision and then to have the Task Force finalize it. Tackling social mobility will need not only policy change but institutional change as we adjust the entire way we look at serving students. Instead of providing services, the University needs to begin to actively serve students, acting in every way to create an atmosphere that welcomes them. This includes increased organizational unity in messaging, new ways to reach students, new ways to advise students in times of crisis, and more programming to students most at risk.

We as student leaders look forward to building a better KU in shared partnership with administration. That foundation begins with the students who need it most.

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List of Interviewees:

Dr. Matt Melvin, Vice Chancellor of Admissions

Dr. Susan Klusmeier, Interim Vice Provost of Undergraduate Studies

Kaci Bray, Assistant Director for Diversity and Outreach of KU Admissions

Paul Buskirk, Associate Athletics Director for Student Athlete Support Services

Dr. Sarah Crawford-Parker, Director of University Honors Program

Dr. Joseph Erba, Assistant Professor of Strategic Communication

Dr. Christopher Anderson, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Programs in the School of Business

Dr. Precious Porras, Assistant Vice Provost, Office of Diversity and Equity

The Collective, a group of selected socio-economic support services that includes representatives from the Office of Undergraduate Studies, TRiO, McNair Scholars, and other Social Mobility focused programs

Holly Storkel, Associate Dean of Academic Innovation and Student Success for the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Karen Ledom, Director of College Advising and Student Services for the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Corrine Bannon, Assistant Director for Academic Data Analytics

Dr. Peter Ukpokodu, Professor of African American Studies

Jennifer Wamelink, Associate Vice Provost of Student Affairs