The ABCs of Campus to Community

OFFICE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN
2022-2026
As we embark on the next chapter of Kennesaw State University’s history, we are committed to a stronger and more vibrant relationship with community partners. In 2021, KSU’s “Roadmap to R2 Success” was updated to reflect a fourth “pillar” in our path forward – advancing community and culture.

Economic development and community engagement are critical components of Kennesaw State’s commitment to the communities we serve. Whether here in Cobb County, throughout metro Atlanta and northwest Georgia, or across the state, the impact of KSU students, alumni, and faculty continues to bring value to those places where we live and work.

This Economic Development and Community Engagement Strategic Plan – The ABCs of Campus to Community – stresses the importance of ensuring that the resources and support of KSU are accessible, that we are bridging relationships between the research and innovation on campus and the communities we serve, and that we are instilling a culture of confidence in our relationships with partners throughout the region and state.

Kennesaw State University has long benefited from the support and collaboration provided by Cobb County, Metro Atlanta and the state beyond, and we are committed to building upon those partnerships. We are committed to investing ourselves and the institution in our communities, and will strive to advance sustainable relationships for the benefit of all in the future.

Kathy S. Schwaig
President, Kennesaw State University
In recent years, metro Atlanta and the State of Georgia have experienced tremendous growth. Our region and state are at the forefront of innovation, job creation, and community investment.

Kennesaw State University is in the heart of this growth, innovation, and opportunity.

This growth and vibrancy are accompanied by new challenges and opportunities – demands on our education and healthcare systems, the need for advanced and sustainable infrastructure, new technological innovation, and the desire for active and robust community life, among many others.

Kennesaw State is committed to building a more vibrant and sustainable Georgia by working in coordination with policy makers and stakeholders at all levels of government, in business and in the non-profit world.

Communities and economies are fundamentally dynamic. Adaptability and flexibility are critical, particularly given the rapidly changing region in which we live. Awareness, receptiveness, and responsiveness to the needs of stakeholders is necessary for effective economic development and engagement.

This strategic plan will serve as a guide for Kennesaw State University’s approach to sustainable economic development and impactful community engagement in the coming years.

Sincerely,

Tyler Reinagel
Associate Vice President of Economic Development
Kennesaw State is a public university with 11 colleges on two metro Atlanta campuses. As a leader in innovative education, KSU offers undergraduate and graduate degree programs. It is a member of the University System of Georgia and the third-largest university in the state with nearly 43,000 students. The university’s vibrant campus culture, diverse population, strong global ties and entrepreneurial spirit draw students from all parts of Georgia, the nation and 102 countries from around the world.
Since 2018, Kennesaw State has been designated as a doctoral research institution (R2), placing it among the top 6 percent of U.S. colleges and universities with high-level research activity.

KSU is dedicated to enhancing undergraduate educational experiences with an impactful learning environment, while developing graduate programs for a highly educated workforce. At the same time, Kennesaw State’s commitment to new knowledge and discovery have brought a dedication to interdisciplinary research with relevance. KSU places a focus on partnerships and connections as a way to advance community and culture.

By strengthening research and teaching in fields relevant to the state, region and the world, Kennesaw State has built a network of more than 130,000 alumni who play vital roles in all walks of life.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The strategic goals of the Office of Economic Development and Community Engagement for 2022-2026 are simple and direct – the ABC’s that define our work and every effort we undertake – ensuring Accessibility, fostering Bridges toward sustained and mutually beneficial relationships, and instilling Confidence in collaborations and partnerships among both KSU stakeholders and community partners.

STEERING COMMITTEE

In late Summer 2021, a 16-member steering committee was assembled and charged with informing the Office of Economic Development and Community Engagement’s efforts, from their own perspectives.

This committee consisted of eight faculty, staff, and students – members “internal” to KSU – and eight representatives of public, private, and nonprofit organizations in the region – the “external” members.

- Internal membership was generated from the Faculty Committee on Community Engagement, representation from outward facing campus offices, and a student member recommended by the Dean of Students.
- External membership was generated from Chambers of Commerce, municipal and county governments, school districts, nonprofit organizations, community improvement districts, and private-sector industry partners.

CHAMBER SUMMIT

In February 2022, the Office of Economic Development and Community Engagement hosted an on-campus “Chamber Summit” for Chamber Presidents, Board Chairs, and Workforce Development Directors from throughout metro Atlanta and northwest Georgia.

In addition to welcoming Chamber and Economic Development leaders to our campuses for tours, conversations with academic deans, and presentations about various campus resources and services, the 30 participants participated in a facilitated conversation to inform this Strategic Plan.

Objectives and Development

“COMMUNITY AND CULTURE” PILLAR

In Fall 2021, KSU’s “Roadmap to R2 Success” was updated to reflect the University’s commitment to the communities we serve.

Advancing community and culture is a core component of the University’s path forward. This builds on the pillars of enhancing undergraduate educational experiences, growing graduate programs and enrollment, and promoting interdisciplinary research with relevance. The four goals of the advancing community and culture pillar are:

- **Nurture** a welcoming campus climate, a sense of belonging, and a broad marketplace of ideas.
- **Strengthen** KSU engagement with external organizations to include corporations, boards, governments, and community partners.
- **Advance** athletic, artistic, and educational programming to engage the community with campus events and activities.
- **Foster** mutually beneficial collaborations to increase annual growth in KSU’s economic impact on the region.

This Economic Development and Community Engagement Strategic Plan is rooted in this pillar, and the goals of “advancing community and culture” drive the strategic goals, initiatives, and action items defined here.
VIRTUAL FEEDBACK
In early 2022, a web-based survey was launched and distributed to both KSU and community stakeholders through a variety of tools – KSU Today for faculty and staff, through social media platforms for both internal and external stakeholders, and via direct email to partner (and potential partner) organizations throughout metro Atlanta and northwest Georgia.

This survey yielded 142 responses, with roughly equal representation from KSU and community stakeholders.

Respondents provided feedback on their previous experiences in university-based economic development and community engagement, what role they see economic development and community engagement playing in the University and community, and their hopes and expectations for what the Office of Economic Development and Community Engagement can do to support their efforts in the coming years.

PEER AND ASPIRANT STUDIES
An assessment of self-identified peer and aspirant institutions was conducted. These peer and aspirant institutions were selected based on several characteristics, but all are public, non-Land Grant R2 universities.

Staff research and conversations with our counterparts at several of these institutions yielded many insights and best practices. These insights and best practices included organizational structure, mission and vision identification, and effective and constructive relationship building with academic units and faculty.

Challenges with outreach and engagement, governance and advisory bodies, and innovative initiatives were also discussed and received some very helpful insights. The information stemming from these studies, adapted to the challenges and opportunities unique to KSU, are reflected in the goals, initiatives, and action items in this Strategic Plan.

Challenges and Opportunities

RELATIVE YOUTH AND CHANGING DYNAMIC OF KSU

Established in 1963, KSU is among the youngest institutions in the University System of Georgia (USG). The student body and culture of the university have been changing in dynamic ways over the past decade, including the merger with Southern Polytechnic State University in 2015, the elevation to R2 status in 2018, and an almost 23% growth in student enrollment from 2015 to 2021.

With 157 of 159 Georgia counties represented in the Fall 2021 semester, KSU has much broader appeal than at any point in its history. Graduate student enrollment has grown to over 4,000 and KSU’s student body is now majority-minority, with more than 50% of enrolled students self-identifying as minority by race.

PHYSICAL LOCATION

Kennesaw State University is uniquely positioned as a suburban research institution. This location makes degree programs more accessible and positions KSU to work more effectively with community partners. This also makes KSU experiences like athletic events, artistic performances and exhibits, and lifelong learning opportunities, more readily accessible to families and neighbors.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Research and innovation have become a vital characteristic of Kennesaw State University’s profile in recent years. With growth in externally funded research, increased resources and programs

PEER/ASPIRANT INSTITUTIONS

- A Boise State University
- B Portland State University
- C San Diego State University
- D University of Missouri St. Louis
- E IUPUI
- F Eastern Michigan University
- G Montclair State University
- H Kent State University
- I University of North Carolina Charlotte
- J Florida Atlantic University
to encourage innovation, and collaborations to encourage entrepreneurship across disciplines, research and innovation will be more entrenched as a core function of KSU.

Innovation is critical to faculty research and student success. It is augmented by inspired approaches to experiential learning, collaboration with community partners, and maximizing the University’s positive impact on the regional and statewide economies. With the commitment of the president to KSU’s constructive community impact, and the USG chancellor to sustainable economic development, the Office of Economic Development and Community Engagement will be championed and empowered in the coming years.

ECONOMIC DRIVER AND COMMUNITY PLAYER

While teaching and research are at the heart of any R2 University’s mission, the University must embrace its role in the broader community and economy where it exists. Experiential learning is an increasingly commonplace tenet of education, getting students embedded in civic and corporate life to further their own knowledge base. Graduates are entering the workforce and building their lives, largely in the metro Atlanta area. Faculty research and innovation bring improvements and insight to fields ranging from healthcare and education, to engineering and computing, among many other disciplines. Access and interdisciplinary dynamic are critical to a thriving economy and vibrant community.

Building a shared understanding of the complex concepts of “economic development” and “community engagement” is an obstacle. Understanding the relationships, demands, expectations, and broad network of actors is a challenge. Opportunities exist in empowering students, faculty, and community partners to better understand where their studies, research, and organizations fit into the broader notions of economic development and community engagement.

Vision

Kennesaw State University will lead engagement between economic and community partners and the University in substantive and adaptive ways. Through reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationships, we will drive a culture of lifelong learning, informed decision-making, and stewardship of public trust.

Mission

- **Implement** goals established in Kennesaw State University’s Roadmap to R2 Success
- **Influence** culture of Kennesaw State University to foster deeper understanding and appreciation of the importance of economic and community partnerships
- **Instill** innovation and entrepreneurship as cornerstones of the student and faculty experience at Kennesaw State University
- **Cultivate** collaborative partnerships with governmental, industry, and nonprofit stakeholders, focused on mutual benefit
- **Dedicate** Kennesaw State University to robust community partnerships, efforts to enhance the economic vitality of the region and state, informed decision-making by policy makers and community leaders, and encouraging innovative responses to evolving opportunities

Values

The core values of the Office of Economic Development and Community Engagement are:

- **Serving** as an accessible and inclusive partner for students, faculty, and staff on campus, and public, private, and nonprofit partners off campus;
- **Strengthening** mutually beneficial relationships to ensure an increasingly positive impact on the communities KSU serves;
- **Encouraging** innovation, research, entrepreneurship, and collaboration to bring new ideas to fruition for a more vibrant community and region; and
- **Treating** all on-campus and off-campus partners with respect, integrity, and trust.
Strategic Goals – ABC’s

STRATEGIC GOAL 1: ACCESSIBILITY

OBJECTIVE: Ensure that economic and community partners throughout Cobb County, metro Atlanta and northwest Georgia, and the state of Georgia find Kennesaw State University to be accessible across disciplines and functions, and are comfortable approaching the University for collaboration, support, and innovation.

INITIATIVE 1A: Establish a culture of constant contact with economic partners

- Build a culture of more active engagement with Chambers of Commerce, Development Authorities, and City/County Economic Development officials throughout metro Atlanta and northwest Georgia
- Prioritize timely responsiveness to economic development stakeholders
- Bolster relationship with University System of Georgia’s (USG) Office of Economic Development, and partner USG institutions, for the broader economic vitality of the region and state
- Disseminate current data and information on student enrollment, KSU workforce development efforts, degree programs, graduate placement, and research productivity

INITIATIVE 1B: Provide avenues to Kennesaw State University for community partners

- Streamline on-campus experiences for neighbors and partners to encourage participation in KSU athletic, cultural, and educational opportunities
- Support faculty outreach for applied community-engaged research and student experiential learning
- Establish simplified pathways for community and industry partners to access KSU’s academic and research expertise and resources

INITIATIVE 1C: Create awareness of resources and support for innovation, entrepreneurship, and engagement

- Design and adapt digital marketing of business incubator programs to meet evolving industry and participant needs
- Adapt physical space to meet demands of researchers, entrepreneurs, and innovators
- Develop long-term incubator services plan that addresses the opportunities and gaps in the current business incubation landscape of metro Atlanta and northwest Georgia

INITIATIVE 1D: Enhance awareness of applied research capacities and resources

- Extend outreach to public and nonprofit partners
- Encourage faculty engagement with internal support available through the A.L. Burruss Institute of Public Service and Research
Strategic Goals – ABC’s

STRATEGIC GOAL 2: BRIDGES

OBJECTIVE: Foster a culture in which Kennesaw State University’s faculty, staff, and students value the bridging of the gap between campus and community, building stronger relationships with our community in a dynamic, holistic, and mutually beneficial fashion.

INITIATIVE 2A: Foster collaborative partnerships with shared goals and mutual benefit
- Host events to highlight, acknowledge, and celebrate campus-community collaborations
- Amplify on-campus events and opportunities for neighbors and community stakeholders to create a sense of place and pride in KSU athletic, cultural, and educational opportunities
- Facilitate and coordinate community outreach programs that maximize Kennesaw State’s academic and research strengths and student development
- Strengthen a culture of on-campus collaboration and communication among different units with overlapping stakeholders, to ensure that external stakeholders can easily navigate across and with these units productivity

INITIATIVE 2B: Prepare students to be active, informed, and engaged members of the communities after graduation
- Create avenues for knowledge-sharing and information
- Provide meaningful applied research experiences and portfolio-building opportunities for students
- Foster strategic connections between students and the region’s industry experts and business community
- Encourage faculty development of capstone or practicum-style courses by matching departments, faculty, and individual courses and firsthand student experiences to needs identified by public, private, and nonprofit partners

INITIATIVE 2C: Advance relationships with local and state economic development leaders, business leagues, and professional organizations
- Maintain constant dialogue regarding local, regional, and statewide workforce development priorities
- Work with academic departments to develop certifications and degree programs that align with regional and state economic needs
- Convey to corporate partners, business leagues, and professional organizations the value, strengths, and qualifications of Kennesaw State’s students and faculty

INITIATIVE 2D: Enhance applied research capacity and skills to meet evolving needs and demands of community partners
- Identify disciplines to enhance and expand the Burruss Institute for Public Service and Research’s scope of services
- Partner with academic leadership and faculty to adapt curriculum and program offerings to meet emerging trends in innovation and entrepreneurship
- Commit to awareness of ongoing student and faculty research for more substantive and sustained community partnerships
Strategic Goals – ABC’s

STRATEGIC GOAL 3: CONFIDENCE

OBJECTIVE: Instill a culture of confident interaction with Kennesaw State University and collaborative efforts with the University among civic leaders, community partners, and economic development colleagues.

INITIATIVE 3A: Create opportunities for open and ongoing dialogue with community and economic partners

- Encourage and facilitate faculty, staff, and student participation in local nonprofit boards, advisory committees, industry councils, and professional organizations
- Serve as the connection point for faculty seeking a substantive and bona fide partnership for student experiential learning, community-based research, and embedding of innovation and entrepreneurial efforts to benefit the broader community
- Organize resource library for community members to have “one stop” access to information about university assets, programs, and subject matter experts
- Create platforms for faculty, staff, and students to better understand the dynamics of community and economy, with particular emphasis on the unique challenges and opportunities facing Cobb County, metro Atlanta and northwest Georgia, and the state of Georgia
- Maintain the “front door” to the university, giving partners a reliable and consistent conduit to the vast resources of a dynamic and growing university

INITIATIVE 3B: Instill culture of trust and transparency

- Recognize research that mutually benefits faculty and students, along with demonstrated community need
- Communicate honestly about KSU’s resources, capabilities, and limitations
- Fulfill expectation of timely, professional, and constructive responses to inquiries and requests from public, private, and nonprofit partners
- Actively listen, and commit to understanding the perspectives of on-campus faculty, staff, and students, as well as off-campus partners and stakeholders

INITIATIVE 3C: Advance Kennesaw State University’s profile as a regional research institution, driven by the Roadmap to R2 Success

- Align Kennesaw State’s academic degree programs, capstone and practicum experiences, and economic impact priorities with regional and statewide economic plans
- Ensure that Kennesaw State’s economic development priorities continuously align with University System of Georgia Office of Economic Development priorities and long-term objectives
- Meet communities where they are, bringing interdisciplinary research with relevance to civic groups, local governments, economic development partners, and nonprofit organizations throughout the region
- Strengthen and deepen university-wide, strategic partnerships with key public, private, and nonprofit organizations that address local and regional priorities related to economic and workforce development, innovation and entrepreneurship, regional resiliency, and community health
- Build university-wide infrastructure and capability to coordinate and communicate key components of KSU’s economic, community, and workforce development agenda, including degree programs, student groups, industry councils, on-campus events and resource showcases, and deeply rooted relationships with economic and civic partners
- Strengthen a culture of on-campus collaboration and communication among offices with overlapping stakeholders, striving for continual improvement to the navigation and approachability of Kennesaw State’s economic and community resources
Future Governance and Engagement

With the guidance of the Steering Committee, this Strategic Plan has been a genuine and authentic collaboration. The insight and input of both internal and external members yielded a dialogue that would not have been possible without equal representation and consistent engagement.

Moving forward, the Office of Economic Development and Community Engagement will maintain a formal advisory board as the successor to the Steering Committee. The committee will be convened quarterly, with no meetings occurring outside of the KSU academic year. Members of the Advisory Committee will serve two-year staggered terms (initial one-year terms for nine positions to establish staggered construct) which begin on July 1, except for the student member who will serve a one-year term.

- No individual college shall have more than one faculty member in simultaneous or overlapping terms, and every effort will be made to rotate seats among colleges.
- Student members shall be solicited from the Student Government Association and/or Dean of Students.
- In the final quarter of the term’s year (April-June), Office of Economic Development and Community Engagement staff will solicit nominations and volunteers to serve for the subsequent term.
- In addition to the Advisory Board, Economic Development and Community Engagement staff shall continue to engage with the Faculty Committee on Community Engagement to address specific and focused concerns and opportunities for internal structures and programs. A priority for FY2023 is to work with Faculty Senate leadership to clearly define and more actively engage with this Faculty Committee, specifically as it relates to opportunities internal to Kennesaw State University.

### FORMAL ADVISORY BOARD

**INTERNAL ADVISORS**
- KSU Faculty (5 Members)
- KSU Staff/Admin from community-facing office
- KSU Foundation
- KSU Staff/Admin from Career Planning and Development
- KSU Student (One-Year Terms)

**EXTERNAL ADVISORS**
- Cobb Chamber
- Municipal Government
- Other County-Level Chamber
- County Government
- Community Improvement District
- Atlanta Regional Commission
- School District
- Corporate Partner
- Nonprofit Organization
THE ROADMAP TO R2 SUCCESS

THIS ROADMAP GUIDES KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY’S VISION TO BE A TOP-TIER R2 INSTITUTION.

The R2 roadmap is dedicated to the advancement of our faculty, students and staff who are at the epicenter of our educational mission. These goals and objectives are designed to promote pedagogical excellence, research advancement, professional development, transformative learning, community engagement, and a vibrant campus culture.
ADVANCE COMMUNITY AND CULTURE

GOALS: A Focus on Partnerships and Connections

» Nurture a welcoming campus climate, a sense of belonging, and a broad marketplace of ideas.
» Strengthen KSU engagement with external organizations to include corporations, boards, governments, and community partners.
» Advance athletic, artistic, and educational programming to engage the community with campus events and activities.
» Foster mutually beneficial collaborations to increase annual growth in KSU’s economic impact on the region.

INITIATIVES

» Offer inclusivity training for the campus community.
» Host community impact events to celebrate partners, nonprofits, and public officials.
» Improve Athletics facilities and advance the Athletics Master Plan.
» Identify and engage in opportunities to enhance the visibility of KSU.

ENHANCE UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

GOALS: An Impactful Learning Environment

» Attain first-year retention rate of 82% by 2025.
» Achieve six-year graduation rate of 60% by 2028.
» Provide unique educational opportunities.

INITIATIVES

» Strategically advance the impact of advising.
» Improve class accessibility.
» Increase external funding for scholarships.
» Incentivize the Honors program.
» Empower college-level accountability for student success.

GROW GRADUATE PROGRAMS AND ENROLLMENT

GOALS: A Highly Educated Workforce

» Increase graduate program enrollment to 10% of KSU student population by Fall 2025.
» Align graduate programs to areas of strategic emphasis and growth.
» Ensure graduate students, faculty, and programs are institutionally prioritized and adequately resourced.

INITIATIVES

» Strategically develop new graduate degree programs in alignment with targeted research and academic priorities.
» Enhance infrastructure to manage graduate research and teaching assistants and admissions processes.
» Develop strategic initiatives to promote and populate Double Owl Pathways.

PROMOTE INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH WITH RELEVANCE

GOALS: A Commitment to New Knowledge and Discovery

» Target research productivity goals, including increasing research expenditures and activity by 20% per year.
» Build a strong and sustainable infrastructure to support research.

INITIATIVES

» Identify targeted research areas of excellence for KSU in partnership with university and community stakeholders.
» Sustain and expand programming to encourage faculty and students to collaboratively engage in research.
» Support the advancement of entrepreneurship and innovation opportunities arising from research and discovery.
### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIC PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

<table>
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<tr>
<th>KSU MEMBERS</th>
<th>COMMUNITY MEMBERS</th>
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| **Shannon Tovey**  
Associate Professor of Reading and Literacy Education,  
Bagwell College of Education | **Dana Johnson**  
COO, Cobb County Chamber of Commerce  
Executive Director, SelectCobb |
| **Catherine Lewis**  
Assistant VP, Museums, Archives, & Rare Books  
Professor of History Radow College of Humanities and Social Sciences | **Tracy Styf**  
Executive Director  
Town Center Community Improvement District |
| **Michael Serkedakis**  
Lecturer of Marketing and Professional Sales  
Coles College of Business | **Cindy Williams**  
CEO  
Cartersville-Bartow Chamber |
| **Monica Nandan**  
Director of Strategic Partnership and Social Impact Professor of Social Work and Human Service Wellstar College of Health and Human Services | **Jeff Shropshire**  
Senior Vice President  
C.W. Matthews Contracting Co., Inc. |
| **Liz Martin**  
Associate Professor of Architecture  
College of Architecture and Construction Management | **Luke Howe**  
Economic Development Director  
City of Kennesaw, GA |
| **Macie Thompson**  
Director of Foundation Relations  
KSU Foundation | **Honorable Lisa Cupid**  
County Commission Chair  
Cobb County, GA |
| **Amanda Long**  
Director of Employer Relations and Career Outreach, KSU | **Nicole Lawson**  
Regional Director – Northwest  
United Way of Greater Atlanta |
| **Annalise Oestreich**  
KSU Student  
Human Services | **Kevin Daniel**  
Chief of Staff  
Cobb County School District |

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STAFF

Phaedra Corso, Vice President for Research  
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Kimberly Henghold, Director of Community Engagement  
Clay Long, Economic Development and Community Engagement Program Coordinator  
Joe Risby, Hatchbridge Incubator Program Manager  
Sarah Young, 2021-2022 Economic Development and Community Engagement Faculty Liaison  
A.L. Burruss Institute for Public Service and Research  
Christy Storey  
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Matt Lyons  
Akilah Hairston  
Ashley Feierstein