



**Chancellor Bernadette Gray-Little**  
**Testimony to the Senate Ways & Means Committee's Higher Education Subcommittee**  
**Wednesday, March 7, 2012**

Chairwoman McGinn, Ranking Member Kelly and members of the subcommittee: Thank you for the invitation to testify today in support of the Governor's budget recommendation for the University of Kansas and the Regents system.

As the state's flagship university, the mission of the University of Kansas is to lift students and society far above by educating leaders, building healthy communities, and making discoveries that change the world. The recommendations contained in the Governor's budget will advance that mission for the benefit of our students and state.

Through our comprehensive strategic plan, Bold Aspirations, we are charting a deliberate path toward being recognized as a top-tier public research university. We are proud to be a member of the Association of American Universities, but intend to aim higher by being a model AAU member. To do that, we must compare ourselves against noted peer universities like Indiana, Colorado and Iowa, and must make the changes that our peers will want to emulate.

Those changes are under way now, putting the university on a bold path to greater success. But those changes will not be possible to implement fully without continued support from the Legislature.

## EDUCATING LEADERS

To educate leaders, a university must have great professors and great academic programs.

We have extraordinary faculty, like Val Stella, honored nationally for his pharmacy research, some of which he discussed with the Senate Commerce Committee earlier this session. Robin Rowland was named a Distinguished Rhetorical Scholar by the National Communication Association in October. And Judy Wu is not only a leader in nanomaterials research, but also a mentor to students. Her undergraduate research assistant, Logan Wiley, earned a Goldwater Scholarship for the study of supercapacitors.

Additionally, this academic year nine KU faculty members were named Fulbright scholars, the second most of any university in the nation.

Such professors are the bedrock of a strong multidisciplinary university. They enable us to offer more majors than any other Kansas school and have more nationally ranked graduate programs than all other schools in the state combined.

They also mentor students like Kelsey Murrell, who earned a prestigious Rhodes Scholarship. She's KU's 26<sup>th</sup> Rhodes Scholar, a number unmatched by any other Kansas university.

To educate future leaders like Kelsey, and to advance our research mission, we want to recruit additional acclaimed professors to KU. That is why we support the Governor's recommendation to provide \$3 million for our Foundation Professors initiative. This will enable us to recruit faculty members who are members of national academies—a mark of high distinction and one of the measures on which the AAU evaluates its members.

We are also building on our academic strengths to address the state's key challenges and meet vital workforce needs.

Thanks to the support of legislators and policymakers, we have expanded the School of Pharmacy in Lawrence and last fall opened our new program in Wichita to help close the state's pharmacist shortage.

With support from Johnson County residents, we are expanding the Edwards Campus so the Kansas City area will have access to 10 new academic programs. Just last Friday we officially opened the Business, Engineering, Science and Technology Building on the Edwards Campus. That follows the dedication earlier in the year of the KU Clinical Research Center in Fairway, which will house clinical trials of treatments for a range of conditions.

We're also expanding the School of Engineering thanks to the strong support of this committee and your colleagues in the Legislature, as well as Governor Brownback. Stuart Bell, dean of the School of Engineering, is with me today and we're happy to report that KU has great news regarding progress on the Engineering Expansion Act.

Our fall undergraduate enrollment in the School of Engineering was up 10 percent over the previous year. In fact it is at its highest level since 1982. Four of our engineering departments have enrollment near or above 400 students. The school has hired a second recruiter to help draw attention to the opportunities high school students have when they pursue a degree in engineering.

These efforts appear very promising as freshman applications for fall 2012 entry into the school are up 55 percent over this same time last year. Admissions to the fall 2012 freshman class in the school also are up 43 percent over this same time last year. This tells us that most of these applicants have shown they possess the skill set regarded as necessary to succeed in their rigorous first year of study.

Significant growth in the student body, such as this, puts space at a premium. The School of Engineering has plans under way for Phase II construction. This facility will add more than 100,000 square feet that will add significant space for instructional classrooms, student project laboratories and student services to ensure students graduate on time.

As our student body grows we must maintain a delicate student-to-faculty ratio that ensures greater student success. Five new faculty positions have been created this year. This is year one of a six-year program to increase faculty size and help ensure optimum instruction.

It appears these actions are not a moment too soon. As evidenced through our Spring Engineering and Computing Career Fair, employers are rebounding and rebuilding.

February's career fair drew 106 employers to campus specifically to connect with students in engineering and the hard sciences. Only 64 employers attended last year's spring career fair. It's also important to note that employers at this year's career fair have strong ties to the region. Roughly three-fourths of these employers either have a facility or are headquartered in Kansas or the Kansas City metro area.

We will continue to work to uphold our responsibility to educate the engineers our state needs to support this vital sector of economy, and I hope you will support the Governor's request for \$3.5 million to continue the expansion.

Doctors are also vital to our health and prosperity. We have expanded our School of Medicine in Wichita to a four-year program, as well as adding a new medical program in Salina to train physicians for rural communities. To ensure we are able to recruit the next generation of physicians for those communities, we support the Governor's recommendation for an additional \$1.8 million for the Kansas Medical Student Loan Program.

This program provides tuition, fees and a monthly stipend in the form of loans for medical students. Students work off the loan by entering a primary care specialty and then practicing in a medically underserved area of the state, or by paying off the loan with interest.

Fortunately, more students are choosing to work off the loans by practicing in underserved areas of Kansas, but that means the program is short of funding. Without the Governor's recommended funding, we will not be able to offer the full complement of 120 loans, and instead would have to reduce the number of student loans by 38.

All of these efforts combine to boost the Kansas economy by ensuring that employers can create jobs and fill them with qualified people. To that end, we are enhancing our recruitment of top students in and out of Kansas, and offering new four-year renewable scholarships.

We are also committed to helping more students succeed and graduate on-time, such as through an early intervention program for students who fall behind. And we're revising the core curriculum so every graduate has the knowledge and skills to succeed in their careers and their lives. This will also make it easier for students to transfer to KU and not have to retake courses.

Our aspiration is for 90 percent of freshmen to continue to their sophomore years, and for 70 percent of students to have graduated within six years. Achieving these goals will put us in line with our aspirational peers around the nation.

These and other changes will enable us to increase the number of students who stay at KU and earn their degrees.

## HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

The word health may bring to mind research in cancer, obesity or autism, all of which are KU strengths. But a healthy community encompasses more.

It includes sustainability, as exemplified at the new Center for Design Research, built by the same KU architecture program that built Greensburg's 5.4.7 Arts Center. It also includes education in the arts and humanities.

KU also strengthens community health by creating jobs through the largest business incubator network in the state, the Bioscience and Technology Business Center. The BTBC now has three locations, two in Lawrence and one at the KU Medical Center in Kansas City. It houses both startups created from KU research, and established companies like Garmin and Ligand Pharmaceuticals that want to partner with our faculty.

All total, there are now 23 active start-up companies that were created from KU research, the most recent being Cancer Survivorship Training, Inc., which educates health professionals on how to better care for cancer survivors.

We've also launched a biorefining initiative, led by Bala Subramaniam, that could create sustainable prosperity in rural Kansas by tapping into a multi-billion dollar biochemical market. This partnership involves both the U.S. Department of Agriculture and ADM, and holds tremendous promise for rural communities.

The great wealth of knowledge and expertise possessed by our faculty, staff and students benefits Kansans. So our strategic plan calls for bringing together top scholars from across disciplines.

These will include the Foundation Professors I mentioned earlier, who would be at the cornerstone of our strategic initiatives that will help KU meet the grand challenges faced by our state and world.

These strategic initiatives include discovering new treatments and cures, creating sustainable prosperity and energy production, harnessing the power of information technology, and ensuring communities have the opportunity to succeed and prosper.

I do want to add that as the economy recovers it is becoming more and more difficult to retain top-flight faculty and staff. This is especially the case when we are competing against private institutions that have benefitted from the recovery in the stock market. We have taken targeted action to reward excellence and retain valuable employees, but with the Regents block grant remaining flat this is a growing challenge.

## MAKING DISCOVERIES THAT CHANGE THE WORLD

As you may know, last fall The University of Kansas Cancer Center applied for National Cancer Institute designation and the review team made its site visit two weeks ago. The effort to reach this point has brought new treatments to patients closer to home through an alliance with regional hospitals, the Midwest Cancer Alliance.

It has also led to new clinical trials, such as the trial Scott Weir and the Institute for Advancing Medical Innovation are conducting on a treatment for adult leukemia. One statistic that is particularly impressive is that eight of the 17 cancer-fighting drugs in the NCI drug discovery pipeline were formulated at KU.

We are tremendously grateful for the support legislators have provided thus far, and ask that you continue the \$5 million appropriation for the KU Cancer Center, as recommended by Governor Brownback. We should know whether we have earned NCI designation later this year, but patients throughout the region are benefitting from this effort.

Of course cancer research is just a part of the research, scholarship and creative work that occurs in every field of study at KU.

We're studying spinning electrons, receding glaciers and school bullying. We're preserving the Cherokee language and helping foster children graduate high school. Donna Ginther's work revealed racial disparities in NIH grant funding, while Muriel Saunders showed that iPads can help visually impaired children.

These types of discoveries benefit our society, as well as the undergraduate and graduate students who get to work with leading scholars.

Our strategic plan will enhance research by reducing barriers, increasing incentives and providing new opportunities for doctoral students. And it will raise scholarly engagement in all departments through faculty mentorship and post-tenure review.

Again, comparisons with the nation's leading public research universities will serve as our measuring stick, and drive our aspirations.

## CONCLUSION

KU's path forward is charted by our Bold Aspirations strategic plan. It is supported by Changing for Excellence, an initiative to make KU more efficient with our resources. Our actions for increased efficiency would also be aided by several pending pieces of legislation.

We're also undertaking Far Above: The Campaign for Kansas to gain additional support from private donors.

Our aspirations are truly bold, and we will hold ourselves accountable by closely tracking our progress, and by comparing ourselves to other leading research universities.

This is an exciting time to be at the University of Kansas, and you should be very proud of the students, faculty and staff who are all contributing to the vitality and prosperity of this state.

It is an honor to work with them, and with the alumni, donors, policymakers and friends who believe in KU's mission. Together, we are building a truly great flagship university.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify to you today and would welcome any questions you may have.