

## **Admissions Task Force Report**

March 3, 2010

### **TASK FORCE CHARGE**

The Admissions Task Force was charged by Chancellor Gray-Little to recommend admissions criteria that support the overarching goal of the University's enrollment planning initiative: student academic success.

#### Specific Tasks:

- Reviewed materials developed in 2006 and 2007 by the Comprehensive Admissions Work Group
- Examined latest research on admissions criteria and student success
- Evaluated KU's pilot test of non-cognitive variable regarding scholarship applicants
- Developed admissions scenarios for submittal to the Board of Regents in January of 2010
- Reviewed retention and graduation data relative to potential admission variables

#### The Task Force recommendations address:

- Recommendations regarding the Kansas Board of Regents Curriculum
- Recommendations for admissions criteria for first-time freshmen at KU
- Resources required to implement recommended strategy
- Metrics to evaluate recommended criteria

#### Members of the Task Force included:

- Marlesa Roney, Chair
- Arvin Agah
- Sarah Crawford-Parker
- Lee Furbeck
- Hannah Nusz
- Juliet Kaarbo
- Lisa Pinamonti Kress
- Joy Maxwell
- Lori Reesor
- Fred Rodriguez
- Barbara Romzek
- Ernest Shepard
- Kent Spreckelmeyer
- Linda Luckey, Staffing

## **BACKGROUND**

The task force met on November 11, 2009, November 30, 2009, December 7, 2009 and January 5, 2010. After examination of information such as retention rates of first-year students by composite ACT scores, admissions criteria from Big 10 and Big 12 schools, application acceptance rates at KU, and high school graduation rates; the task force proposed recommendations found in Part I and Part II of this document

The recommendations in this report are designed to achieve the following objectives:

1. Improve retention rates
2. Improve graduation rates
3. Keep students engaged and challenged academically during their senior year in high school
4. Clearly communicate information to students and parents about what it will take to succeed at KU by providing recommended courses in high school in addition to those courses that are required by the Regents Curriculum
5. Keep more academically talented students in-state

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **I: Recommendations regarding the Regents Curriculum.**

The Task Force supports the March 1, 2010 Board of Regents initial recommendations to require all college-bound students to complete the Regents curriculum with a 2.0 minimum cumulative GPA and endorses the changes recommended in this curriculum, as described below. In addition and consistent with the Regents' report that "An institution may seek Board approval to implement additional and/or more rigorous standards that are in keeping with its mission," the Task Force recommends that KU-bound students also complete 2-4 units of foreign language and that one of the units of English be completed during the year in which the student graduates from high school.

A detailed summary follows:

1. The Regents Curriculum should include:
  - 4 units of English
  - 4 units of Math with one unit taken in the year the student graduates from high school
  - 3 units of Natural Science
  - 3 units of Social Science
  - 3 additional units of (English, Mathematics, Natural Science, Social Science, Foreign Languages, personal finance, fine arts, speech/debate/forensics, Journalism, Computer/information systems)
  - *Students enrolling at KU must complete*
    - 2-4 units of Foreign Language
    - An English course taken in the year the student graduates from high school

## II: Recommendations for admissions criteria for first-time freshmen at KU.

The Task Force recommends both an “automatic admit” threshold and a “review” threshold for applicants to the University of Kansas, as follows.

### A. Comprehensive Admissions with Automatic Admit Threshold

- Complete the Regents Pre-College Curriculum for KU with a minimum 3.25 GPA
  - ~AND
- Minimum ACT score of 25
  - ~AND
- Essay required (will be used for scholarship consideration, continued recruitment, etc.)

Rationale for automatic admit threshold:

- A. 3.25 GPA. Achievement of a 3.25 GPA in the KU Regents Pre-college Curriculum establishes an appropriately high academic bar that demonstrates academic maturity and ability. The 3.25 threshold is congruent with the University’s requirements for scholarship consideration.
- B. 25 ACT. The retention rate for first-time freshmen at KU (2006-2008) who have an ACT of 25 was 79.4%. For students whose ACT is 21, the retention rate was 72.5%. Nearly half (48%) of entering freshman at KU have earned a 25 or greater on their ACT.
- C. Essay. Every student who applies for admission to KU must write an essay. This essay could address both the experience and intent of a student around the issues of “engagement” which is an important ingredient for student success. Although this essay will not be used to make the admit decision, the information contained in the essay will be useful to other university processes such as scholarships, the honors program, departmental contacts when recruiting students, and early emphasis on student participation in engaged learning experiences at KU.

**B. Review Threshold:** If a student does not meet the automatic admit threshold outlined above, a comprehensive admission review will focus on the following factors [weighting TBD]:

- A. Satisfactory completion of the KU Regents Curriculum with a minimum 2.0 GPA
- B. Academic achievement as measured by high school grades and standardized test scores
- C. Academic commitment as measured by continuous enrollment in increasingly more rigorous courses, such as a four-year sequence of Math.
- D. Evidence of academic maturity as measured by the essay

### **III. Recommendations regarding annual resources required to implement recommended strategy.**

Implementing comprehensive admissions at KU will require significant modifications to the University's enterprise student systems (PeopleSoft). No estimate is available for this one-time investment, but the needed results can be achieved through prioritization and reallocation.

The recurring expenses for implementation focus on the additional staffing needed to read student essays and make admission decisions for applicants who do not meet the automatic admit criteria. A three-tiered model is recommended. Students who present clear evidence of ability to succeed at KU will be admitted at the Tier One level with no further review. Students whose credentials require additional assessment will be reviewed at the Tier Two and Three levels. Total cost for this additional staffing is estimated at \$90,000 annually. In addition, approximately \$15,000 annual support will be needed for other operating expenses.

- Additional funding for recruitment staff: \$90,000 (estimated).
  - 8 Tier Three readers @ 2 hours/week for 24 weeks – October through March = 384 hrs @ \$33/hour for a total of \$12,672
  - 8 Tier Two readers @ 4 hours/week for 18 weeks – Mid-November through March = 576 hrs @ \$14.42/hour for a total of \$10,901
  - 17 Tier One readers @ 20 hours/week for 16 weeks – December through March = 5440 hrs @ \$12.00/hour for a total of \$65,280
- Overhead/infrastructure for the equivalent of 3 FTE staff (estimated): For phone, computer, work stations, etc.
  - \$15,000

*Please note that the resources noted above are those needed to actually process the admissions and do not include the staffing and technology investments needed to increase the prospect pool or yield.*

**IV. Recommended metrics to evaluate recommended criteria.** The following metrics will be calibrated to institutional goals and aspirations and evaluated annually:

- Meet or exceed strategic enrollment goals in the following categories
  - Numbers
  - Diversity
  - Quality
- Increased number of applications
- Increased academic profile (ACT average)
- Increased retention rate
- Increased four-year graduation rate
- Increased six-year graduation rate