

Extending Our Reach

I want to share some exciting news for Kent State University—our Kent Campus now has the highest six-year graduation rate of any public university in Northern Ohio.

Our record 67.5% graduation rate surpasses our prior record of 65% and is the fifth highest among all of Ohio's public universities, behind The Ohio State University, Miami University, University of Cincinnati and Ohio University.

The fact that we reached this achievement during a global pandemic is a testament to the true grit and determination of our students and the outstanding efforts of our faculty and staff. It also reflects our commitment to welcoming students as they are, from wherever they are, and providing them the needed support to get them to degree completion.

Kent State has received 12 national awards in the last six years for our exemplary student support services and is consistently recognized for its innovative programs that get students to the finish line.

Our high graduation rate also reflects our commitment to offering the promise of higher education to a wide and diverse group—those who never thought college was a possibility because they didn't have the advantages of some.

Even before they attend classes at Kent State, we assist them as they

explore programs and go through the application process. We provide first-year experiences to help them connect to campus, register for classes and meet their peers—all the while assuring them, "Yes, you can!" From enrollment through graduation, we continue to stand by students to ensure that their dream of a degree becomes a reality.

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Access and diversity have been at the core of Kent State's mission since our inception, as you'll read about in this issue's cover feature on access ("Creating a Community of Belonging by Embracing Access for All").

Now we are primed to expand college access even further. This means enrolling more students with high financial need, more first-generation students and more students from regions with low rates of college education.

The goal of helping students is the driving force behind our *Forever Brighter* campaign, which has a goal of raising \$350 million to support student success, expand university initiatives and build for the future. You can read more about the campaign in this issue ("A Campaign of Brilliant Proportions") and at the campaign website (www.kent.edu/foreverbrighter), where you will find many ways to give.

Please know that your generosity will help Kent State remain true to its core responsibility as a community-based university system, to meet our students where they are and to offer them the bright future that higher education will provide—not just for the fortunate few, but also the meritorious many. These students aren't lacking the ability to succeed; most of the time they are just lacking the money.

Kent State's commitment to access and student success is in our institutional DNA. It's who we are, it's what we do and what we will *always* do. Most importantly, it's the right thing to do.



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President Todd Diacon congratulates a Kent State University College of Podiatric Medicine graduate at the spring Commencement ceremony.