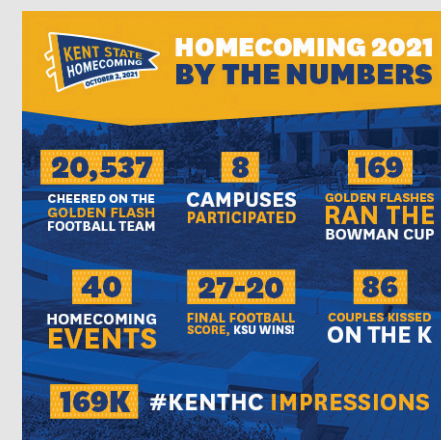




Homecoming Weekend 2021

The Kent State University community came together both in person and online to celebrate Homecoming Weekend 2021 from Friday, Oct. 1 through Sunday, Oct. 3.

"It was great to welcome alumni and friends home to make new memories and take part in many favorite homecoming traditions," says Valoree Vargo, vice president for philanthropy and alumni engagement. "Last year, we learned that our Golden Flashes enjoyed the opportunity to participate online from wherever they are, and we were excited to see alumni celebrating both on campus and across the globe once again."



Here are some highlights from Homecoming Weekend 2021:

Class of 2020 Commencement

1. Sean Joseph Beckwith, BSE '20, a graduate of the College of Education, Health and Human Services, reveals that he was Flash—with help from President Todd Diacon and Melody Tankersley, senior vice president and provost—at the special outdoor Commencement ceremony for the Class of 2020 held on Manchester Field, Friday, Oct. 1. Commencement for the class was held virtually last spring due to COVID-19 restrictions, but nearly 600 members of the class and their families returned to the Kent Campus during Homecoming Weekend 2021 to celebrate their milestone in person—and about 440 graduates crossed the stage for recognition.

2. Kent State President Todd Diacon addresses the Class of 2020 at the special Commencement ceremony. "You are here today for what I hope and expect will be a one-of-a-kind event in the history of this great university," Diacon noted. "You will be unique in the annals of Kent State because yours will be the only class to celebrate Commencement and return to campus as alumni at the same time."

International Homecoming

3. At the International Homecoming Festival, held on Friday afternoon, attendees learn about the diversity of cultures represented at Kent State. They viewed cultural performances and picked up "passports" that were stamped at stations set up

on the Student Green adjacent to Risman Plaza and redeemed for free food. At each country's station, international students and alumni shared the history and culture of their homeland through posters, artifacts, displays and native foods.

Homecoming Kickoff

4. Members of the 2021 Kent Campus homecoming court are introduced at Homecoming Kickoff, a new event to mark the start of homecoming weekend. The celebration, held Friday evening on the lawn by The John Elliot Center for Architecture and Environmental Design, included food, fun and music by the Kent State University Marching Golden Flashes. Attendees also heard from Randle L. Richmond, new director of athletics, and Kent State President Todd Diacon.

Fireworks Show

5. Fireworks light up the sky over Kent following the Homecoming Kickoff event. Kent State invited the community to assemble downtown by the West Main Street bridge for the best view of the fireworks show, which began at dusk on Oct. 1.

Bowman Cup 5K Walk/Run

6. Racers compete in the annual Bowman Cup 5K Walk/Run during Kent State's homecoming. The race, named after former Kent State President George Bowman, began at 8 a.m. on Saturday, Oct. 2, at the university's Beverly J. Warren Student Recreation and Wellness Center. President Todd Diacon ran in the race dressed as Elvis. His wife, Moema Furtado, came in first in her age group. Those who weren't able to attend could participate in a virtual walk/race.

Homecoming Parade

7. Members of the Class of 2020 lead the way down Main Street, serving as the 2021 homecoming parade grand marshals. The parade began at 10:30 a.m. on Oct. 2 on the corner of Midway Drive and Main Street and traveled west on Main Street into downtown Kent. For those attending virtually, a first-ever livestream was hosted by Kent State students. It featured a coffee chat with President Todd Diacon and a question-and-answer session with Randle L. Richmond, director of athletics, and Melody Tankersley, senior vice president and provost.

8. The Marching Golden Flashes head down Main Street during the homecoming parade. The parade featured dozens of floats, local high school marching bands, the homecoming court, Kent State cheerleaders and athletes, student organizations, local officials and more.

Kiss on the K

9. Kent State President Todd Diacon and his wife, Moema Furtado, take part in "Kiss on the K" along with other Kent State couples during Homecoming 2021. Couples who feel that Kent State played an important role in their relationship gathered on the K at Risman Plaza (in front of the Kent Student Center) at noon Saturday and kissed when the bell rang at 12:30 p.m.

Flash Nation Tailgate

10. Alumni and students attend the Flash Nation Tailgate at Dix Stadium before the football game. The Black Alumni, Cleveland and Lake County chapters, also hosted tailgates with food and friends in the parking lot outside of Dix Stadium.

11. Randle L. Richmond, MS '06, Kent State's new director of athletics, speaks at the Flash Nation Tailgate. He spent 10 years as a Kent State athletic department staff member prior to accepting the senior associate athletic director position at Old Dominion in 2015. He assumed his new duties on May 1.

Homecoming Game

12. Jatia Caples and Andrew Pitko pose together after being announced as 2021 homecoming royalty during halftime of Kent State's homecoming football game at Dix Stadium. Caples is an integrated social studies major sponsored by the Women's Center. Pitko is an environmental conservation bio major sponsored by Phi Delta Theta fraternity. They are pictured with 2020 homecoming royalty, Annemarie Guta, BSE '20, and Kent State President Todd Diacon.

13. Golden Flashes who attended the homecoming football game don special gold or blue sunglasses as part of the official *Forever Brighter* campaign kickoff during halftime.

14. Fifth-year quarterback and grad student Dustin Crum, No. 7, leads the game-winning drive against the Bowling Green State University Falcons. Crum completed 15 of his 28 pass attempts for 134 yards. He had a season-high 93 yards rushing, with one touchdown. "Maybe it's that engineering degree, maybe he understands angles better than I do, says head coach Sean Lewis. "He does an incredible job creating and seeing completions."

15. Kent State Golden Flashes ring the Starner Victory Bell at Dix Stadium after beating the Bowling Green Falcons 27-20 during Kent State's homecoming football game on Oct. 2.

16. President Todd Diacon celebrates with the Marching Golden Flashes in the stands of Dix Stadium.

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—Valoree Vargo