



Kent State University at Stark Celebrates 75 Years

Kent State University at Stark celebrated its 75th anniversary with a gala dinner on March 10, 2022. Speakers included Kent State President Todd Diacon; Denise A. Seachrist, PhD, dean and chief administrative officer at Kent State Stark; and Peggy Shadduck, PhD, vice president of Regional Campuses and dean of the College of Applied and Technical Studies. More than 200 people attended, including current and retired employees, alumni, and local and state community leaders.

The yearlong celebration (during the 2021-2022 academic year) kicked off in November 2021 with the 30th season of the popular Featured Speakers Series, which Seachrist calls “our gift to the community.” The series has attracted thousands of Stark County residents to the Kent State Stark Campus to hear from public figures and national and international experts on a wide range of topics. Speakers for the 2021-22 season included Fred Rogers’ biographer Maxwell King, child protection advocate Elizabeth Smart and environmental activist Erin Brockovich.

Anniversary activities will culminate with the repair and rededication of the Mullen Memorial, an area with a pergola and benches on the Kent State Stark Campus that was dedicated in 1990 in memory of longtime Kent State Stark faculty member Inga Mullen.

Kent State established a branch in Canton in 1946, prompted by the postwar surge of WWII veterans taking advantage of benefits provided by the GI Bill. Although the Canton branch lost its state funding in 1950, Kent State continued to offer extension programs in Stark County as enrollment grew. In 1966, Ohio lawmakers authorized an

official Stark County branch of Kent State, as well as providing some funding to help construct a permanent home.

Over the years, even with funding challenges, the campus has continued to expand its buildings, course offerings, degrees and enrollment. Today, with 400 faculty and staff and 3,300 students, Kent State Stark offers the beginning coursework for more than 340 bachelor’s degrees and all of the courses required for 25 degrees.

Seachrist, who became interim dean in 2014 and was appointed dean and chief administrative officer in February 2016, has also helped expand global education opportunities, enabling students to study abroad and welcoming students from foreign countries.

In 2015, Kent State Stark became the first of Kent State’s Regional Campuses to partner with an international university when it welcomed students from China’s Shenzhen Polytechnic University. In November 2021, Kent State Stark hosted leaders from the University of Rwanda to finalize details on a partnership that has already begun to provide joint classes, international exchanges and research opportunities.

As for the future, Seachrist sees the enrollment challenges facing higher education as an opportunity for Kent State Stark to become more engaged with lifelong learning. She envisions building more relationships with community businesses and schools, and expanding opportunities for K-12 students, as well as adults interested in learning specific skills.

Learn more at www.kent.edu/stark.

Above: As Kent State University at Stark celebrates its 75th anniversary, it continues to expand its offerings, course offerings, degrees and enrollment. Pictured, left to right, construction on the campus in 1966 and the Kent State Stark Campus today.