“Access, diversity and degree completion are in our institutional DNA.”

– Todd Diacon, PhD
President, Kent State University

See Page 12
Kent State is committed to broad accessibility, a diverse student body and degree completion. We highlight recent projects, programs and initiatives the university has put in place to help achieve those goals.

The Vision of Vernon Sykes

Two decades ago, state Senator Vernon Sykes, Professor Emeritus of Political Science, created a program at Kent State that opened students’ eyes to the workings of state government.
And the Winner Is...

Congratulations to Drew Cate, BBA ’84, MBA ’88, Talmadge, OH, the winner of the random-generated drawing from correct submissions to the Squirrel Search contest. He received a box of squirrel-themed swag from McKay Bricker Framing & Black Squirrel Gifts in downtown Kent. Check out the gift he’s showing off in the photo here (at top right). The black squirrels can be found in the spring/summer 2021 PDF on page 4 (the mass vaccination site at the Field House, in the lower right corner), page 21 (in front of Verder Hall, in the lower right corner) and page 43 (next to the Rock, at the right). (This time, we’ll tell them to head in different directions!)

Last issue’s winner, Cindy Dalton, MBA ’92, Guelph, MB, also sent in a photo that shows her modeling her gifts. “I am enjoying my black squirrel stuff!” she writes. “And I am getting compliments on it when I wear it!” Although we didn’t receive her photo in time for it to appear in the spring/summer 2021 issue, we’re sharing it in this one. (We noticed that the last two winners earned MBAs in the ‘80s! Is it we’re sharing it in this one. (We noticed that the spring/summer 2021 PDF on page 4 (the mass vaccination site at the Field House, in the lower right corner), page 21 (in front of Verder Hall, in the lower right corner) and page 43 (next to the Rock, at the right). This time, we’ll tell them to head in different directions!

For a chance to win some squirrelly stuff, check out the PDF of the print layout, which will be available for download on the digital edition Dec. 15. Happy squirrel searching!

The Rest of the Story

Many Kent State alumni have heard the story of how Grounds Superintendent Larry Wooddell and former Davey Tree employee “Biff” Staples relocated 10 black squirrels from Canada to the Kent Campus in 1961.

Sargeant Aylies, BS ’51, Sanford, NC, president of the Class of 1961, called to fill us in on who paid for that endeavor.

As a senior class gift, the Class of 1960 left the university 30 redwood benches (mostly constructed and stained by Aylies), 10 chestnut trees and some audio equipment for the library. The gifts were officially presented to President George A. Bowen at the commencement ceremony, to be placed on the Kent Campus.

However, Aylies says that after graduation he received a call from Mark Anthony, assistant dean of men, telling him there was money left in the class fund after the bench project was completed.

“Mark Anthony told me that Wooddell had the idea of bringing the black squirrels to Kent and asked if the Class of 1960 would like to use their remaining monies to buy the 10 squirrels,” Aylies recalls. “I thought it was a great idea and told them to go forward with the project.”

And the rest is history. So the next time you see black squirrels running around the Kent Campus—and it won’t take long—remember you have the Class of 1961 to thank for them.

Lost in Time: Can You Help Us Solve This Mystery?

Stephen Hanzely, BS ’62, Youngstown, OH, retired Youngstown State University professor of physics and astronomy and former Fulbright Scholar, shared some stories about his favorite Kent State professors in a StoryWorth post (StoryWorth publishes keepsake books, which are compiled over the course of a year by sending weekly prompts to the person who wants to share their story with others.)

In the post, he mentioned: “There is a curious footnote to [Kent State’s] semicentennial celebration. In honor of the event, a time capsule was ceremoniously prepared, sealed and buried somewhere on campus in 1960 to be opened during the university’s centennial year. However, when it came time to open the capsule in 2010, NOBODY COULD REMEMBER WHERE IT WAS BURIED. To my knowledge, it has not yet been found as of 2021.”

He forwarded this post to us with a PS: “Did anyone find the time capsule yet? Intrigued, we contacted Special Collections and Archives to see if they knew. Amandia Faehnel, public services librarian and associate professor, responded: ‘No, unfortunately, the mystery still remains. Luckily, Kent State documented the legend search for the 1960 Capsule really well as part of the Centennial Celebrations of 2010. However, our department has not received any new information or leads since the time of that search. It’s been written about quite a bit, and is still unsolved. We have no documentation to give any further guidance. In contrast, the 2010 Centennial Time Capsule burial has been well documented for future reference, which is a big relief’

If YOU happen to remember the location of the 1960 time capsule, please contact magazine@kent.edu.

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.

“FROM ENROLLMENT THROUGH GRADUATION, WE CONTINUE TO STAND BY STUDENTS TO ENSURE THAT THEIR DREAM OF A DEGREE BECOMES A REALITY.”

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

The goal of helping students is the driving force behind our Power 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 importantly, it’s the right thing to do.

Todd A. Diacon, President

Email: president@kent.edu

Instagram: @kuspresdiacon

We want to hear from you!

Respond to magazine content or comment on topics related to Kent State by writing: Kent State Magazine P.O. Box 5190 Kent, Ohio 44242-0011 or magazine@kent.edu

Responses may be edited for style, length, clarity and civility.

Visit us online

www.kent.edu/magazine

President Todd Diacon congratulates a Kent State University College of Podiatric Medicine graduate at the spring Commencement ceremony.
New Home, New Name for Kent State’s Business College

Kent State University business students, faculty, staff and alumni will soon have a new building to call home on the Kent Campus. Thanks to a generous gift from Cleveland businessman, entrepreneur and former US ambassador to Ireland, Edward F. Crawford, the capital campaign for the new business building is now complete. The Kent State Board of Trustees approved the building construction on behalf of the college in a special meeting held Friday, Oct. 22.

In gratitude to Crawford and his family for what Kent State says is “the largest single gift” in its history, the university will name the new building Crawford Hall and has renamed the College of Business Administration to the Ambassador Crawford College of Business and Entrepreneurship.

The Crawford family gift is a cornerstone of the recently announced Forever Brighter $350 million comprehensive fundraising campaign.

“Crawford Hall will be instrumental in how we prepare students for modern business careers,” says Deborah Spake, PhD, dean of the Ambassador Crawford College of Business and Entrepreneurship at Kent State.

At the start of 2021, Bob Archer, MBA ’61, who had already provided private support for the new business building, pledged another $1 million gift in support if the Ambassador Crawford College of Business and Entrepreneurship could raise a total of $19 million by the end of 2021. The college surpassed expectations and exceeded the $19 million challenge. Archer fulfilled his commitment, and the impressive new Crawford Hall is moving forward.

Challenge Met!

At the start of 2021, Bob Archer, MBA ’61, who had already provided private support for the new business building, pledged another $1 million gift in support if the Ambassador Crawford College of Business and Entrepreneurship could raise a total of $19 million by the end of 2021. The college surpassed expectations and exceeded the $19 million challenge. Archer fulfilled his commitment, and the impressive new Crawford Hall is moving forward.
Kent State’s College of Aeronautics and Engineering Is Growing in Students and Square Footage

Kent State University’s College of Aeronautics and Engineering is the only college in the country that combines the disciplines of aeronautics, engineering and engineering technology in one cohesive college, enabling cross-disciplinary synergy in academic programs and research. Programs such as mechatronics engineering, cybersecurity engineering and unmanned aircraft systems flight operations are unique in Ohio, providing much-needed expertise in these emerging technical disciplines.

Enrollment growth in the college has exploded, with a 53.6% increase in enrolling first-year students and 21% percent enrollment growth college-wide since 2018. To support current and future enrollment growth, the university will construct a 44,000 square-foot expansion of the Aeronautics and Engineering Building that will include collaborative spaces, state-of-the-art classrooms and office space.

"Kent State recognizes the importance of virtual education in this rapidly changing landscape of higher education," says Christina Blobaum, PhD, dean of the College of Aeronautics and Engineering. "The expansion’s two new classrooms, as well as teaching laboratories, will be equipped to enable virtual delivery in a streaming, synchronous mode, which will also support larger classes, student competitions, and K-12 outreach and other community-oriented events."

The successful completion of this project, as part of our mission to educate students to be highly competent engineers of the future, will allow us to support larger classes, student competitions, and K-12 outreach and other community-oriented events.

Kent State’s College of Podiatric Medicine Is on a Secure Footing

The Podiatry Foundation, in Independence, Ohio, has made a $10 million donation to Kent State to fund scholarships, research and continuing medical education programs within the Kent State University College of Podiatric Medicine. The foundation recently approved a lump-sum gift of $5 million and has pledged $250,000 annually for the next 20 years to support the college.

In recognition of this gift, the current clinical space located on the first floor of the college in independence will be named The Podiatry Foundation Foot and Ankle Clinic. Any auxiliary spaces associated with the clinic, including the clinical space in Cleveland’s MidTown neighborhood, will also bear this name.

The Timken Foundation of Canton has donated $1.5 million to the college, marking the largest gift from a private foundation to the college’s dean. "Additionally, the support for our Foundation, whose purpose is to serve and nurture education and research in podiatric medicine, will allow us to support these high-achieving future doctors through scholarships to ensure our field has enough qualified practitioners in the future," says Allan Boike, DPM, FACFAS, the college’s dean. “"A gift of this magnitude is transformational to the future education of our podiatry students, not only through our ability to award more scholarships, but also because of the increased credibility that will come from our enhanced research and continuing medical education," says Kent State President Todd Diacon. "The longstanding relationship between the college and The Podiatry Foundation has been instrumental in Kent State’s recognition as a leading college in the important field of foot and ankle medicine. We are very grateful for their visionary support."

Kent State University College of Podiatric Medicine, one of nine accredited podiatry colleges in the United States, is a four-year, graduate-level medical college, granting the degree of Doctor of Podiatric Medicine. The college’s mission is to educate students to be highly competent doctors of podiatric medicine who will excel in residency training.

"We must be able to support these high-achieving future doctors through scholarships to ensure our field has enough qualified practitioners in the future," says Allan Boike, DPM, FACFAS, the college’s dean. "Additionally, the support for our Foundation, whose purpose is to serve and nurture education and research in podiatric medicine, allows us opportunities to grow our national reputation as a best-in-class medical research and educational institution." At least one of the scholarships created through this gift will be named the Thomas V. Melillo Scholarship. Thomas Melillo, DPM, was president of the Ohio College of Podiatric Medicine (now the Kent State University College of Podiatric Medicine), from 1984 through 2012, when the merger with Kent State took place.

In July 2012, as part of the merger, a foundation was established for charitable and educational purposes. Since 2013, the foundation has done business as The Podiatry Foundation, whose purpose is to serve and nurture education and research in podiatric medicine. Since its inception, the foundation has assisted many national, state and local podiatric medical organizations as well as students and residents in the Greater Cleveland area.

"This gift is the culmination of several years of dialogue between the foundation and the university," says David Nicolanti, PhD, executive director of The Podiatry Foundation. "It will help to secure the financial strength of this important local institution."

Founded in 1916 as the Ohio College of Podiatric Medicine, the college has graduated more than 6,000 podiatrists who have made outstanding contributions to the field and study of podiatric medicine. Kent State University College of Podiatric Medicine has regional and national affiliations with more than 50 hospitals worldwide and more than 300 private practitioners nationwide that provide externship training to the college’s students. Currently, the college maintains an average four-year enrollment of 425 students and typically graduates 85-100 podiatrists each year.
Pursuing a Passion for Research
How a Seventeenth-Century Woman Artist Inspired a Twenty-First-Century Award-Winning Thesis.

By Jan Senn

Kent State University Honors College graduate Sarah Hagglund, BA ’21, was named a 2021 Portz Scholar by the National collegiate Honors Council in September. She is one of four honors students from across the country selected in a competition for most excellent undergraduate thesis in several academic areas. Hagglund, who majored in history and anthropology, received this year’s Portz Prize in the Humanities and is the 10th honors student from Kent State to become a Portz Scholar since the national competition began in 1990.

However, months before she began conducting research into the thesis topic that would earn her this distinction, Hagglund was simply writing a final paper for a course on Baroque art and history. In the process, she was introduced to a seventeenth-century Bolognese artist, Elisabetta Sirani, who is key to understanding the experiences of women in the past. Hagglund decided that exploring this topic—the myth of Bologna—as she termed it—would be one of the central themes driving her research for a senior honors thesis. She had been interested in doing so since it was first mentioned to her by her honors academic advisor, Frank Congin, director of academic programs for the Honors College. Students who wish to graduate with honors from Kent State’s Honors College must complete and successfully defend a senior honors thesis/project.

“I figured a thesis would provide some good practical experience for grad school,” Hagglund says. “And I was really excited to have the opportunity to research a topic I could choose and explore on my own.”

“Exploring this topic allowed me to combine my diverse academic interests—as much as art, history, culture, literature and women’s studies—and use an interdisciplinary approach,” she says. “I think having a broader perspective and using different disciplines is key to understanding the experiences of women in the past. And it helps to expand our knowledge of history for all underrepresented groups.”

A week or two after she’d been in touch with the two thesis advisors who had agreed to help her with the project—Matthew Crawford, PhD, associate professor in the Department of History, and Gustav Medicus, PhD, associate professor in the School of Art—the pandemic hit. It made her research more challenging than she had expected.

Hagglund’s work with thesis advisors Crawford and Medicus took place over three semesters, beginning her junior year—and because of the pandemic they did not have a single in-person meeting until after her thesis was complete and her defense had taken place.

“I had many supporters throughout the thesis process, but Dr. Crawford and Dr. Medicus both sacrificed so much time and energy into helping me succeed,” says Hagglund, who graduated in May from the Honors College with university honors and distinction in history. “They championed my voice but also challenged me to produce a thesis I would be proud of. Although I am so honored to be recognized for this award, I really would not have made it through the process without their guidance and support. They stuck with me through it all.”

Her award-winning thesis, “The Myth of Bologna: Women’s Cultural Production During the Seventeenth Century,” views the experiences of women in the city of Bologna through three lenses: history, art, and material culture. “One part of my research was especially rewarding being able to trace a lineage of important women almost throughout the entire history of the city,” Hagglund says. “By the end of the project I had built a timeline—a heritage really—of women important to the legacy and history of Bologna.”

As for whether this cultural participation included women from all social classes, Hagglund says it did—but not necessarily in the same way.

“Rich women, women with familial ties and educated women had much more influence in the city as compared to women working in the silk trade,” she says. “The booming silk trade of the city in the seventeenth century relied heavily on the labor of women and girls. The conditions were typically pretty bad and the pay a fraction of what their work was worth. However, when compared to other textile trades in nearby cities, women in Bologna were much more involved in all levels of production and were likely paid a little more than what was typical (although that doesn’t actually mean much).”

“Women in religious realms seemed to have a separate kind of importance to the identity of the city,” Hagglund adds. “Having a Bolognese native in the 15th century, Caterina de’ Vigi, as the Catholic patron saint of artists added to the city’s support of women artists.” (Caterina of Bologna was a Poor Clare nun, writer, teacher, mystic and artist who was venerated for nearly three centuries in her native Bologna before being formally canonized in 1712.)

“Having a broader perspective and using different disciplines is key to understanding the experiences of women in the past. And it helps to expand our knowledge of history for all underrepresented groups.”

Hagglund participated in a 20-minute presentation of her thesis at the National Collegiate Honors Conference in Orlando, Florida, in October. “I was able to fly down, with the support of Kent State’s Honors College, to present my research alongside two of the other three Portz Scholars and accept my award,” she says.

“Presenting at the conference was a rewarding experience but getting to meet the other Portz Scholars and hear about their research was the highlight of the trip for me. Our research interests overlapped, and I was so inspired by their projects. And getting to present in person and engage with other students and educators meant a lot to me, given how most of my research was undertaken in quarantine last year.”

Currently, Hagglund is a master’s student in Baroque art at Boston University’s Department of History of Art & Architecture. “I hope to continue this research in grad school,” she says. “At the very least, I want to continue focusing on the women artists of the Baroque period. But my program encourages interdisciplinary studies, so I am hoping to continue my approach with that as well. I have a passion for this research, so I will try my best to continue it in some capacity.”
The pandemic has exposed deficiencies in the nation’s infrastructure, healthcare system, housing, economy and more—deficiencies that put into sharp focus the importance of local governments in maintaining a good quality of life for residents. Despite the added pressures and problems, the three mayors who sit on Kent State University’s Board of Trustees have chosen to lean in. They face challenges, to be sure, but they also see opportunities for their cities and the university to help people adjust and thrive in the post-pandemic world.

We asked those mayors—Don Mason, mayor of Zanesville; Pamela Bobst, mayor of Rocky River; and Ann Woman Benjamin, mayor of Aurora—to tell us about their hopes for the future of their cities, their community’s relationship to higher education and their involvement as trustees. Here are some highlights.

Responses have been edited and condensed for clarity.

Dealing with the educational divide: We’re still working on a lot of what I’ll call “social-economic issues” that affect the city. Some people are able to get an education and have good-paying jobs. But we have a lot of people who are being left behind—with low-paying jobs and sometimes more than one job to make ends meet. We continue to see a large divide between those who end up being educated and going to college, and those who fall out before they get to their senior year in high school.

Putting people first: I always try to think about what the public needs on a day-to-day basis. When I go to Kent State board meetings, I’m really pleased that the university is focused on the student experience—on making sure the students don’t have artificial obstacles in front of them. Once a person begins that first year of college, we are committed to trying to help that student get their degree so the money they’re borrowing—or the money they’re working for in a part-time job—isn’t wasted. We’re trying to make sure it’s invested in their education so that in four or five years they’ll be able to be well employed.

Appealing to all: Aurora was founded in 1709, so it’s a very old and historic community. We have residents who have been here for decades; we also have newer residents moving here from the suburbs, and they bring a different set of expectations. Reconciling those changing demographics and divergent interests can be challenging. I’m trying to implement ideas and programs that will appeal to the entire community. Actually, I’ve found that decision making for a large community and responsiveness to various constituencies are similar for a mayor and a university president, although perhaps on different scales.

Managing growth: As a very desirable community in Northeast Ohio, we are growing. And that growth is something we want to control and manage. We have been buying up green space to preserve it and to help control development. In addition, though, with growth you have to look at infrastructure—what you will need down the road to accommodate not only the increasing numbers of residents, but also of our visitors.

I want to continue to maintain a beautiful, desirable community with 21st-century amenities while preserving our small-town charm—despite the growth that will undoubtedly occur. We also have some recreational opportunities. We have parks and green spaces across our city, and we need to develop a plan to link all of those. We need trails to provide people the opportunity to traverse the city through our parks.

Connecting people with jobs: We are a highly educated community. Many of our residents have their own businesses or are entrepreneurs, or they work in big companies in Northeast Ohio. We have a vibrant manufacturing and industrial sector, however, that is struggling to find employees. I think some of it is a result of the pandemic. We are working closely with local and regional institutions of higher learning to make connections for our employers and find people willing to work on a manufacturing line who also have the technical skills—and in some cases, the computer and mathematical skills—necessary for the jobs.

Listening to all perspectives: Whenever we’re faced with a challenge—pandemic or not—there are a lot of perspectives to consider before a decision can be made. Listening to all perspectives and all voices is so important because sometimes you only get one chance to make a good decision.

Aligning education with business: A lot of our high school students take college-level courses through our community colleges. That’s an effective transitional piece on a path to a four-year university like Kent State. It’s very helpful for students who are trying to figure out their career or education path and for parents who are paying for their child’s education. And maybe these are individuals who never thought they would graduate from a four-year university but now have an opportunity because they can transition so effectively.

This is something that I shared with Kent State President Todd Diacon. I think the alignment of the university with the needs of businesses is very important—listening to businesses in terms of what they need, then incorporating that into the curriculum and providing opportunities where students are placed and learn on-the-job skills. It’s important to do, and something the university has done. You see it in its strategic planning and some of the investments it’s made.

Working together productively: As the mayor, I work with the city council; the president of the university works with the board. And we work with several audiences all at the same time. As the mayor, I am responsible for the safety and welfare of a large population—and so, I am sensitive to some of the university’s similar challenges. I also understand the importance of communication, transparency and—above all—accountability.
Creating a Community of Belonging by Embracing Access for All

By Kat Braz

Kent State boasts a legacy of inclusivity that traces back to its first full academic year on the Kent Campus in fall 1913. With a class of 138 women and six men, Kent State Normal School began as a school for working adults, educating women at a time when many universities enrolled very few—if they were admitted at all.

Years later, baby boomers—primarily first-generation children of immigrants to Northeast Ohio and African American migrants to Cleveland, Akron and Youngstown—enrolled in large numbers on the Kent Campus and at the university’s Regional Campuses. This diverse enrollment trend led to the founding of Black United Students and the first celebration of Black History Month—established at Kent State in February 1970 by students and faculty in Pan-African Studies, preceding the national holiday designation in 1976.

As Kent State University President Todd Diacon puts it, “Access, diversity and degree completion are in our institutional DNA.” And as the university looks to the future, it remains committed to being a place of belonging where all students can cultivate their talents and create a brighter tomorrow. “Universities are driven by foundational cultures and histories—and Kent State is no exception,” Diacon says. “Broad accessibility and a diverse student body have been ever-present at Kent State.”

Today, embracing a new wave of access and diversity at Kent State means enrolling more underrepresented students as well as first-generation students, nontraditional students and students with high financial need. Historically, these populations have lower rates of attending and graduating from college. Often there are intersections across these populations. Understanding the barriers to access and dismantling them are the first steps toward further increasing graduation rates.

Read on to learn how Kent State continues to expand on its commitment to the founding principle that education should be available to every citizen.

Affordability Is Paramount to Expanding Access to Education

The university hit a record graduation rate this year, with 67.5% of first-time, full-time freshmen who enrolled in fall 2015 earning their bachelor’s degrees within six years. Ten years ago, the graduation rate for the Kent Campus was 49%.

“Our data shows that students who fail to earn a degree at Kent State, particularly at the Kent Campus, drop out because they cannot afford college,” Diacon says. “We need to crack this nut of affordability for roughly 20% of our Kent Campus students with the highest levels of financial need and the lowest rates of graduation.”

The threat of chocking off access to a college degree due to the rising costs of higher education led Kent State to introduce the Flashes Go Further Scholarship Program earlier this summer. The ambitious effort reallocates 3.3% of the annual university budget—about $20 million each year—to help eligible students cover the costs of tuition, general fees and books. It was established to help those students stay in school and get to graduation with as little student loan debt as possible.

“We recognize the power of education to reshape a person’s trajectory, not just for themselves, but often also for their family,” says Sean Broghammer, PhD, interim vice president for enrollment management. “Social mobility can be positively impacted by a degree from Kent State, but one of the primary barriers for students to gain access to the university is cost.”

Students qualify if they are taking at least 12 credit hours on the Kent Campus and their expected family contribution (EFC on the FAFSA) is $10,000 or less. This applied to about 20% of the first-year entering class this fall 2021. For these students, Flashes Go Further will cover the difference between the cost of tuition and the amount of grants and scholarships a student receives. Students do not have to apply to the program, they only need to file the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). Financial need is determined by the results of the FAFSA and Kent State automatically makes the award.

“Flashes Go Further provides an avenue for students who otherwise might not think completing a college degree is a possibility for them because of the cost,” Broghammer says. Learn more about the Flashes Go Further Scholarship Program at www.kent.edu/financialaid/flashes-go-further-scholarship-program.

“Social mobility can be positively impacted by a degree from Kent State, but one of the primary barriers for students to gain access to the university is cost.”

—Sean Broghammer, PhD, Interim vice president for enrollment management

How is Expected Family Contribution (EFC) Calculated?
A student’s EFC is an index number that college financial aid staff use to determine how much financial aid a student receives. The EFC is calculated using information reported on the student’s FAFSA such as the family’s taxed income and untaxed income, assets and benefits (e.g., unemployment or Social Security). Also considered are family size and the number of family members attending college during the year. —U.S. Department of Education

Flashes Go Further Scholarship By the Numbers

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<th>Number of students who received an award for fall 2021 as of 9/29/21</th>
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<td>Number of semesters new freshman may receive the award</td>
<td>Number of semesters incoming transfer students may receive the award</td>
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From a DEI perspective, much of the work to become a student-ready college—one prepared to welcome and support all types of students entering the institution—hinges on ensuring that policies, procedures, processes and programs are equitable.

A Sense of Belonging Begins With Equitable Access

Cost may be the single biggest barrier to student access, but economic challenges extend beyond dollars and cents. Other factors, such as access to social capital and resources, must be considered as well.

“Social capital includes the social network of students,” says Amoaba Gooden, PhD, vice president for the Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI). “Do they have mentors who might guide them down a particular path? Do they have school counselors who talk to them about scholarship applications? Do they have individuals in their lives who will support them in their decision making, in filling out their applications?”

“When it comes to access, we have to think beyond traditional students and include nontraditional students who might have some of those same challenges. They may also be caregivers of additional family members. Do they have the resources within their community or their network that they can tap into to achieve their dream of attending an institution of higher learning?”

From a DEI perspective, much of the work to become a student-ready college—one prepared to welcome and support students from all backgrounds and levels of academic experience—hinges on ensuring that policies, procedures, processes and programs are equitable. Faculty and staff working across Kent State’s campuses must be equipped with the skills to assess and promote diversity, equity and inclusion.

“People often equate diversity with race or ethnicity and conflate the two,” Gooden says. “In its first iteration, diversity was primarily based on access for African Americans to traditionally white institutions. Diversity is now more nuanced and complex and has evolved over time.

“In DEI, we’re focusing on populations that have been historically marginalized and excluded because of factors such as race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, veteran status and socioeconomic status. We also focus on how those identities combine and create different forms of discrimination. And we work with areas across our campuses to ensure that that our programs also foster a sense of belonging and inclusion and there’s equitable access to all.”

To foster that sense of belonging, Kent State must continue to establish and maintain an inclusive environment in order to reach its goals for access, completion and outcomes. If prospective students do not feel represented on campus, they may not enroll. Or if they do come—and don’t receive the support they need—they may not graduate and go on to a successful career.

The Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion advocates for individuals by connecting them with resources to resolve issues. It also offers professional development opportunities and educational training for students, faculty and staff.

Earlier this year, the university embarked on a university-wide Diversity, Equity and Inclusion strategic plan to decentralize diversity efforts and improve Kent State for all members of the community. The four-year effort will build and execute a strategy that will embed diversity, equity and inclusion practices throughout the eight-campus system.

While many programs and units exist to support DEI efforts, a university-wide DEI strategic plan will create more systemic and intentional ways of addressing equity as well as dismantling policies, procedures and processes that marginalize members of the community.

“The goals of the division are strategic institutional goals,” Gooden says. “As we work to expand access across the university, one of our goals is for the population of Kent State to better reflect the population of the state. The division will work in collaboration with the Kent State community to realize that goal.”

Learn more about the Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at www.kent.edu/diversity.

Coming Together for Conversations About Social Justice Issues

The Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) began hosting a series of town hall events titled “Shaping a Better Future: Dialogues and Strategizing for Change” in 2020. Forums included the Black American Experience, the Asian American Experience and the Trans Experience, among others.

“The town halls bring the university together to provide an environment where we can grapple with social justice issues,” Amoaba Gooden says. “Students, faculty and staff are willing to be vulnerable in this space and share their personal experiences. These are powerful conversations that build knowledge and understanding.”

This fall, in collaboration with the College of Arts and Sciences, DEI announced a continuation of last year’s series. Titled “Empowering Kent State: Valuing the Strength of Diversity,” this series expands the conversation, covering topics such as (dis)ability, critical race theory and intersectionality, and international and immigrant experiences.
“I chose to be an LGBT Studies minor because my major didn’t address the unique needs of LGBTQ people in health. After graduating, I want to go into LGBTQ cultural competency in healthcare and continue pursuing the study of gender and sexuality in graduate school.”

Kent State student

Complex Questions
Courses within the School of Multidisciplinary Social Sciences and Humanities cover a range of complex questions within their curricula. Here are some examples:

- Black Lives Matter became a global call for action. But the organizing was very local. How and why do local anti-racist movements gain traction around the globe?
- The celebration of lived experiences, both those of the past and those wished for the future, is often visible in the art, literature and communal practices of immigrants. What can we learn about the migration experience from these cultural expressions?
- Pride parades have evolved from declarations for freedom that entailed great personal risk to incredibly popular events with very little risk to participants. How does this evolution happen? Who leads the shift in social “norms”?
- Why and how does anti-Semitism persist? Are hate groups increasing in number? Who is funding them? What can communities and governments do to combat anti-Semitism?

Subsisting on Instant Ramen Shouldn’t Be a Badge of Honor

There’s an outdated narrative that persists among college campuses and their alumni about the disheartening situations previous generations toughed out as students. Ericka Shoaff, BA ’11, inaugural director of the CARES Center, has heard it all before: “I lived paycheck to paycheck.” “I didn’t have an apartment and crashed on people’s couches.” “I survived only on ramen when I was in college; it’s no big deal.” Except, it is.

“Some of these narratives have been normalized,” Shoaff says. “But we can see that these are issues of basic needs insecurity and of lack of access to resources. If a student doesn’t know where their next meal is coming from or if they don’t have a stable place to sleep, it’s incredibly challenging to maintain their academic pursuits much less thrive.”

The CARES Center, which stands for Crisis, Advocacy, Resources, Education, Support, opened this fall in the Kent Student Center. The idea emerged from students who participated in the 2018 kaizen event hosted by the Great Place Initiative. (“Kaizen” is a Japanese word that essentially means “change for good.” It relates to a business philosophy of continuous improvement.) In its first semester, the center received more than 100 referrals for its case management services.

“The fact that the idea of the CARES Center came from student voices is really inspiring,” Shoaff says. “A few years ago, it was an idea on paper. Now it’s an actual physical space with services and a mission. It’s a testament to Kent State’s willingness to listen to student voices and implement real change. That’s very meaningful.”

The CARES Center, under the Division of Student Affairs, acts as a centralized resource hub where students can connect with service providers, both on campus and off, for assistance in four major categories: food security, stable housing, financial sustainability and mental well-being.

Kent State CARES
The four priority areas of the CARES Center are:

- Food security: The Flashes’ Food Pantry at the center provides access to nutritious food. Case workers can also help eligible students sign up for SNAP benefits.
- Housing stability: When emergency homeless situations arise, the center facilitates the intake and finds temporary housing while connecting the student to community agencies that help secure long-term housing. Case managers can help students look for available housing options and find resources for utilities.
- Financial sustainability: The center offers emergency aid for basic needs and can connect students with other emergency grants and funding available on and off campus for a variety of needs. Case managers can help students develop financial skills such as creating a budget.
- Mental well-being: Although the CARES Center does not offer clinical therapy directly, its case managers are licensed social workers who can guide students to the resources and services available on campus and in the community.
No One Should Face Discrimination Based on Sex or Gender

The Office of Gender Equity and Title IX, recently reorganized under the Division of Student Affairs, is one of many groups in the university dedicated to fostering a sense of belonging, inclusivity, well-being and safety. “Kent State has a legacy of collaborative partnerships working together to keep our campuses welcoming, inviting and safe,” says Tiffany Murray, JD, director of the Office of Gender Equity and Title IX, and Kent State’s designated Title IX coordinator.

Murray points to Kent State’s national recognition as a “Great College to Work For” (Chronicles of Higher Education, 2020) and one of the “30 Most Promising Places to Work in Student Affairs” (American College Personnel Association, 2021) as evidence of the work being done to create an inclusive campus. The university also was ranked the safest campus in Ohio in six of the last 10 years (FBI Uniform Crime Statistics).

The Office of Gender Equity and Title IX is tasked with maintaining and enforcing university policies and compliance efforts regarding gender equity and Title IX, including reports involving sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence or stalking. Title IX’s sexual harassment prohibitions apply to all students, faculty, staff and visitors. Previously, these functions were implemented by the Division of Human Resources. Murray and her staff—now located in the Kent Student Center in Room 250—also implement ongoing prevention initiatives across Kent State’s eight-campus system. “We’re not just the office that investigates matters,” Murray says. “We proactively work to prevent these violations from occurring in the first place. We do this by educating staff and students on the university community standards and our commitment to inclusion and refraining from engaging in unwelcomed and unwanted contact.”

“Why the Office of Gender Equity and Title IX Was Reorganized:
• To strengthen university partnerships and bring together student-facing resources.
• To streamline operations and improve resolution response strategies related to discrimination and harassment.”

Tiffany Murray, JD

Why the Office of Gender Equity and Title IX Was Reorganized:
• To strengthen university partnerships and bring together student-facing resources.
• To streamline operations and improve resolution response strategies related to discrimination and harassment.

Title IX Defined
Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 is a federal law enforced by the U.S. Department of Education that requires all federally funded institutions (such as Kent State) to operate free of discrimination based on sex, including sexual orientation and gender identity.

It’s Not About Meeting a Quota; It’s About Genuine Representation of Experiences and Identities

Lamar R. Hylton, PhD, senior vice president for student affairs, knows firsthand about the transformative power of education. He was born the summer before his mother started her senior year in high school. His father was already in the workforce. Hylton, the first Black person in the university’s history to hold the title of vice president for student affairs, is a first-generation college student.

“I watched my parents climb their way up,” Hylton says. “It’s hard to do that on a high school education. When I had the ability to go to college, I needed scholarships and financial assistance. I needed help navigating this new environment. My parents weren’t positioned to help me financially. “My immediate family’s experience is very different than what my lived experience was growing up, in a very good way. I firmly believe that the changing catalyst for me was obtaining a college degree and, eventually, my PhD. It’s exactly the reason why I feel so strongly about the way we position a collegiate education because it can be transformational, particularly for those students like me who did not come from means or experiences that would indicate opportunities to be successful in a university setting.”

Putting more emphasis on the resources available to underrepresented or marginalized students helps break down the stigma surrounding barriers to access. Hylton, who was promoted to senior vice president for student affairs at the start of the school year, embraces a student-focused approach to leadership that equips students with the resources and support they need to succeed academically.

It’s an approach that’s gained him local and national recognition. In recent months, Hylton has been named the recipient of the NASPA (Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education) Region IV-East Scott Goodnight Award for Outstanding Senior Student Affairs Officer for 2021, named to Crain’s Cleveland Business Forty Under 40, selected as a recipient of the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) Diamond Honoree award and is a member of the 2022 class of the NASPA Pillars of the Profession award.

“Our student experience is the way that we begin to open the doors and remove the barriers to accessing an education.”

Lamar Hylton, PhD

“I firmly believe in centering the student experience and acting in the best interest of the students we are called to serve,” Hylton says. “Our student experience is the way that we begin to open the doors and remove the barriers to accessing an education. I’m proud that our campus community is not only thinking more broadly about the ways in which we remain as accessible as possible to everyone and anyone who would want an education from Kent State but also how we are taking action to implement real change.”

Learn more about the Division of Student Affairs at www.kent.edu/studentaffairs.

Call to Action

Although the university has made significant progress in its goals to expand access and increase rates of completion, there is more work to be done. Lamar Hylton describes his appointment as the first Black vice president of student affairs as a double-edged sword. He’s honored to be named in the annals of the university’s history by way of his historic vice presidency, but he also recognizes his status as “the first” as a call to action that there is more work to be done at the institution.

“If we are committed to a sense of belonging as an institution, a part of that belonging is seeing others who look like you,” Hylton says. “It’s no secret that people of color, more specifically Black or African American identifying students, have given voice to being the ‘only’ in their class. Being an ‘only’ can negatively impact your academic experience. Whether it’s the only Black person, the only woman, the only LGBTQ+, the only differently-abled, it’s hard.

“It’s wildly important for us to make sure that our campus represents a diverse spectrum. Not just racially or ethnically, but across all categories. I don’t want the university to meet a quota. I want us to have some genuine representation of people and experiences and identities that make Kent State University the best place it can possibly be. And that starts with ensuring equitable access for all.”

Learn more about the Office of Gender Equity and Title IX at www.kent.edu/studentaffairs/genderequity-titleix.
Spend even five minutes with state Sen. Vernon Sykes (D-Akron) and you’ll probably come away knowing more about how state government works and the significant role it plays in your life.

“In order for people to get the very best government, a government that works for them, they have to understand it,” Sykes says. “Government is so mystical to a lot of people that they refuse to engage in it. They say, ‘Politics has nothing to do with me.’ But that’s not true at all.”

Sykes, Professor Emeritus of Political Science at Kent State, brought that philosophy to bear as the inaugural director of Kent State’s Columbus Program in State Issues. Since 2001, the semester-long intensive program has aimed to open students’ eyes to the workings of state government—even if, Sykes says, those students thought they had no place in it.

The program paused in 2020 amid the pandemic, and Sykes stepped down as director after 19 years in June 2020. The university is seeking a new director and plans to restart the program in fall 2022.

With more than 30 years in politics, Sykes considers himself a trustee: someone who will do what is in the best interest of his constituents, even if some decisions are unpopular. And the more people know about how decisions are made, he says, the better they can see how the process affects them and where they might find a place in it.

That’s where the Columbus Program, as it is known, comes in. The program has welcomed about 24 students each fall to Ohio’s capital to explore state government in three ways: via classes, through on-site briefings (with elected state officials, state agencies, lobbying firms, think tanks and nonprofit policy/advocacy organizations) and in individualized internships that exposed students to the facets of state government.

Each Monday and Tuesday morning, students gathered in a hearing room of the Ohio Statehouse for class. Ohio Rep. Jamie Callender (R-Concord)—an adjunct professor at Kent State for more than 12 years, whom Sykes brought in as an instructor—would teach government theory. Sykes, often listening in the back of the room, would sometimes debate a point or introduce a different perspective—intentionally exposing the students to the complicated relationship between Republicans and Democrats and the role of partisan politics in developing and implementing public policy.

In the afternoons, students visited dozens of state agencies with Sykes, from the Governor’s office to the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio to state prisons, speaking with the people who plan, administer and operate governance at the state level.

Interim interns, which Sykes helped arrange, took up the rest of the students’ weekdays. By 2019, 367 students had completed the Columbus Program in State Issues.

Launching the program gave Sykes the chance to shape it with a simple but important goal: “I wanted to make sure that the students would understand and appreciate the significant role that state government plays in all of our lives,” he says. It has a hand in everything from issuing business licenses to entrepreneurs to funding school, prison and healthcare systems. Given that, he says, everyone “should be exposed to the big actors—to the stakeholders, the administrators, the planners” in their home state—even those who don’t plan to work in government.

Still, Sykes believes that revealing government’s inner workings encourages citizens to participate, says Sykes’ youngest daughter, state Rep. and House Minority Leader Emilia Sykes (D-Akron), BA ‘08, who participated in the Columbus Program in 2006. So “it’s not really shocking that he would have gone to great lengths to put together a program like this,” she says. “It’s just another way he’s encouraging participation.”

“As he spoke in classes across Kent State’s eight campuses to recruit for the Columbus Program, Sykes often heard student lament that they had no place in a government-focused experience because they weren’t political science majors. ‘They would just shut off and think, this is not for me,’ he says. But he was ‘able to spark their interest’ in the program by showing how they could tailor participation to each student’s interests.

The internships were Sykes’ chance to convince students they had a place in the program. He would ask them what they wanted to do and where they might want to intern to find the best match, says Kathleen Loughry, administrative assistant for the Columbus Program since 2004. “We would sometimes research what was available, but they would have to submit their résumés and schedule interviews.”

A fashion merchandising major could benefit from the experience. Sykes reasoned, by learning how corporate taxes and regulations affect retailers, so he helped secure an internship in the government relations department at the corporate headquarters of what was then known as Limited Brands. A journalism major could gain valuable reporting and government experience with an internship at the Columbus Dispatch. And an accounting major could just as easily crunch numbers at the state auditor’s office as at an accounting firm. The internships were often life-changing for the students, says Loughry, who helped the students navigate the program from start to finish. “Maybe when they went in, they didn’t know what they wanted to do,” she says. But “sometimes when they left, they were completely committed to another direction because of what they saw and what they experienced over their internship.”

“In order for people to get the very best government, a government that works for them, they have to understand it.” —Vernon Sykes, PhD
Access—including access to state government and to career opportunities—is important to Sykes. And that comes as no surprise to anyone who knows his story.

Though Sykes has served for more years in various political offices than most of his students have been alive—three years as an Akron City Council member, 26 years in the Ohio House of Representatives, and now in his fifth year in the Ohio Senate—he did not always believe that such opportunities would be available to him.

“When you’ve been poor, and you’re a minority Black male from the inner city, and you start to see some of the challenges you face—sometimes you get a little discouraged,” he says.

Sykes was one of five children raised in Akron by a single mother who needed welfare to make ends meet. As a pre-teen, Sykes thought the way to improve his circumstances—and put a little money in his pocket—was working as a paper boy for the Akron Beacon Journal. But his mother saw things differently. She wanted Sykes to participate in the U.S. Department of Education’s Upward Bound program, which gives low-income students a better chance at attending college.

“My mother sat down with me and cried,” Sykes recalls. “She said that she didn’t have money to help me go to college. She didn’t go to college. She went to beauty school. And she put a little money in my pocket—was working as a paper boy for the Akron Beacon Journal. But his mother saw things differently. She wanted Sykes to participate in the U.S. Department of Education’s Upward Bound program, which gives low-income students a better chance at attending college.

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“Many of them have stayed close,” says Kathleen Loughry, the program’s administrative assistant. “To this day, they will come to events we have. They are more than willing to promote the program.”

Here, four members of The Caucus look back on their experience with the Columbus Program and how it helped shape what they are doing today.

**MATAR GUEYE, BS ’11**

Matar Gueye and his Columbus Program classmates had a nickname for Sykes: A Cool Breeze.

While the 2010 cohort chose the phrase because of Sykes’ stylish attire and “shiny car,” Gueye says, the moniker held another meaning for him. In Sykes, Gueye saw a man who could do it all: “It blew my mind that he was a state legislator and a professor.”

Gueye decided he wanted to be like that. Today he is the digital campaigns manager of BlueGreen Alliance—a nonprofit coalition of labor unions and environmental groups pushing for a cleaner environment and a clean, thriving economy. He balances managing multiple social media campaigns with crafting communications that go directly to legislators. On a recent day, Gueye helped draft a “Build Back Better” fact sheet sent to U.S. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer’s office, urging the politician to support investing in the manufacturing of clean vehicles and energy.

“It’s a busy, demanding job. But Gueye says Sykes and the Columbus Program prepared him for it.

In the program, Gueye learned everything from how to send a professional cold email—a skill he used in President Barack Obama’s 2012 reelection campaign—to the power of networking. He was so engrossed in the program, he says, that he got straight As for the first time in his Kent State career. And that was no small feat: “Nothing gets past Vernon Sykes,” Gueye laughs now. “He didn’t give anyone any breaks. He held everyone to account.”

**MADISON LISOTTO WHALEN, BA ’11**

You could say Madison Lisotto Whalen owes her career path to the Columbus Program. She certainly says it.

Whalen is a partner at CHW Advisors in Columbus, a full-service government and political affairs firm that helps clients navigate the regulatory and political landscape. She co-owns the firm with Matthew Carlé and Melissa Hoeffel. Whalen interned for Hoeffel, an attorney, during the Columbus Program. And she credits Sykes for the placement. After exploring Whalen’s interest in law during a pre-program interview, he introduced her to Hoeffel and set her internship in motion.

“It’s kind of amazing that, 11 years later, I’m still working with her,” says Whalen, who graduated from Capital University Law School in 2015. “And it was thanks to that connection that he [Sykes] made when I was explaining what my interests were.”

It’s also thanks, in part, to a Columbus Program lesson that Whalen took to heart as she met government officials, lobbyists and stakeholders. Sykes “talked a lot about how far you can go with connections and, if you need a job, that you’re often going to get it through a connection,” she says. “You hear that a lot when you’re an undergrad, but in the program, you could actually see it come to life.”

At CHW Advisors, Whalen focuses on lobbying the state legislature, a career she learned about in the Columbus Program.

“The Columbus Program teaches you about state government and lobbying, and how to work with legislators, and that’s exactly what my job is,” she says. “I was very influenced by the program; it changed the trajectory of my whole career path.”

**LUBNA NAJJAR, BA ’08**

Politics may seem far removed from fashion, but for Columbus Program graduate Lubna Najjar, working within government helped launch her successful fashion label, which she has since sold, and later, her Columbus-based women’s fashion business development firm, IL Moda.

Her fashion label’s biggest customers, Najjar says, were the legislative aides, lobbyists and attorneys she met through the Columbus Program. Today, when IL Moda hosts industry mixers, city council members and the mayor often attend.

As Najjar says, the business succeeds in Columbus in part because of her government work.

**SYKES’ CAUCUS**

Through the Columbus Program, founder and director Vernon Sykes, PhD, helped 367 students realize the impact that state government has on their lives. During orientation, he would gather that year’s cohort and say, “You are now The Caucus”—a group of people meeting to support a movement—and the students would elect the leadership for their cohort.

“Many of them have stayed close,” says Kathleen Loughry, the program’s administrative assistant. “To this day, they will come to events we have. They are more than willing to promote the program.”

One of the most valuable things we learned from Dr. Sykes is that life will continue to evolve—that you should focus on the moment you’re in but also know that it can change for the better.” —Lubna Najjar, BA ’08

The Columbus Program launched Najjar into a series of government jobs—including legislative aide in the Ohio State House of Representatives and policy analyst for the Ohio Board of Regents—that ultimately helped her launch her independent career take off.

And it all began with an internship at Homeland Security that wasn’t sufficiently challenging—and a life lesson from Sykes.

When Najjar told Sykes she was not challenged enough by her internship, he suggested she volunteer with the Ohio Democratic Party. There, she canvassed for the reelection campaign of then-Columbus Mayor Michael B. Coleman. She gained a mentor in the mayor, and new insight.

“One of the most valuable things we learned from Dr. Sykes is that life will continue to evolve—that you should focus on the moment you’re in but also know that it can change for the better,” she says. “If you’re not happy in this exact moment, there are people who will help you.”
REINVENTING LOCAL NEWS
HOW MEMBERS OF THE KENT STATE COMMUNITY AND WORKING JOURNALISTS ARE FINDING WAYS TO REINVENT AND, IN SOME COMMUNITIES, REVIVE LOCAL NEWS COVERAGE.

By Mark Oprea, BA ’15

For years of reading The Plain Dealer, in January 2020 I was finally about to be published in its pages. A freelance journalist with five years of experience, I drove proudly to its headquarters in the Cleveland suburb of Brooklyn, shook hands with the then-editor, and signed a freelance contract. “Hey, if this goes well,” then-editor George Rodrigue told me on Jan. 8, “we could bring you on monthly.” To say I was elated would be an understatement.

In February, I learned that Rodrigue was leaving the paper after accepting an offer from the parent company of Advance Publications, the paper’s sister communications company, including the nine digital media groups, other newspapers across the country, and in the paper by Sun Newspapers, a chain of weekly papers also owned by Advance.

Even so, with a pandemic and the spread of misinformation on the internet, providing local readers with pertinent, timely news is more important than ever. Research shows that communities with diminished news sources have higher taxes, more political polarization, less civic engagement and worse economies.

As alarming as these findings are, there is hope. Digital media circulation and digital advertising dollars are stronger than ever—the former up 27% in 2021—as news startups and Silicon Valley-funded experiments seem to be announced in every weekly media newsletter.

However, creating community-focused coverage with sustainable business models for local news remains a challenge. Ideas abound—and some are being generated by members of the Kent State community. Highlighted below are several efforts that boost local news coverage in parts of Northeast Ohio—and may signal a path forward for other communities as well.

THE PORTAGER

While newspapers across the United States were reeling from the recent effects of the pandemic, Ben Wolford, BS ’11, was devising a remedy of his own—1,646 miles south in his home office in the Dominican Republic.

It was February 2020, and Wolford, a go-getter with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, was applying for new postings while helping raise their two children.

Then, on March 30, Gannett, the company that had bought Portage County’s Record-Courier since 2017, announced companywide furloughs for reporters making over $38,000 and other cost reductions. Soon, 30% of the paper’s staff would be laid off.

In Wolford’s inimitable editorial tone, a cross between the Portager’s inimitable editorial tone, a cross between

“I hung up the phone and thought, ‘This isn’t just a story, this is a market opportunity,’”—Ben Wolford

In Wolford’s inimitable editorial tone, a cross between what he calls a “metro columnist and Twitter speak,” he reported on the pandemic and—with help from Kent State student media interns and freelancers—an array of other news topics, including school board controversies, public spending by the Sheriff’s office, a quirky dairy farm, a homeless camp relocation, bake sales, county government and more. Feedback was positive. By October 2020, 3,200 people were getting The Portager emailed to them—113 of them paying subscribers.
Mike Beder, BS ’00, a Kent-based entrepreneur who owns Water Street Tavern, Venice Café and Kent Sports Bar, says Wolford’s idea him sold them on The Portager in summer 2020. A frequent newsletter advertiser, Beder joined Wolford’s advisory board. He cites his fear of news deserts and his trust in Wolford’s mission. “Ben has so much integrity,” Beder says. “I haven’t second-guessed it since. Also, he’s been very transparent. His email and phone number are at the end of every newsletter. I mean, who else does that?”

Since March 2020, Wolford has published an email newsletter every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. He’s hired a full-time reporter and some part-time staff—his sister, Natalie Wolford, as managing editor, and a part-time reporter plus freelancers, including former Record-Courier sports columnist Tom Harrity.

In March 2021, he built and launched a website, ThePortager.com, which has grown to approximately 80,000 page views per month. He currently has more than 5,000 subscribers, with about 10% of them paid. Readers can sign up for free or start a paid subscription; Wolford even offers a “pay what you can” option.

Advertisers increased during the election cycle, and he hopes to eventually hire a business development officer to target prospects and increase ad revenues.

Although he recently was able to start paying himself, Wolford has other jobs to help make ends meet. He works for his father’s marketing firm, Wolford Communications, and edits the English edition of Il manifesto, an Italian daily newspaper.

“In some ways, the pandemic was a catalyst for making The Portager even possible.” —Ben Wolford

Wolford and his family have been based in Brasilia, Brazil, since last July. He travels back to Portage County as much as he can, but he’s basically running a hyper-local news publication from 7,000 miles away.

“In some ways, the pandemic was a catalyst for making The Portager even possible,” Wolford says. “I don’t think I would have been able to start this and run it as effectively if the whole world hadn’t transitioned to a kind of virtual, global arrangement where you can be anywhere and still be local. I’m even a member of the Rotary Club of Kent—its first foreign member.”

Is The Portager sustainable for the long run? Wolford remains optimistic. “We’ve grown every month, so the numbers are positive in the right direction. With our for-profit model, we can move quickly and iterate often. We’re in constant feedback with our readers, finding out what they like, what they don’t like, and trying to meet their needs. If they like this, they pay for it. Of course, 90% of startups fail. But I’m happy to report that our funding is sustainable, and we’re doing well.”

COLLABORATIVE NEWSLAB AT KENT STATE UNIVERSITY

As COVID-19’s devastation reached universities, Maria McGinnis somehow maintained her composure.

Holding editor positions at KentWord, The Burr and 4 Magazine, McGinnis, BS ’21, knew she couldn’t let lockdown doom and gloom alter her career path. Last April, she watched as internship opportunities fell away or went remote, as COVID effectively ended in-person reporting and shut down in-person classes. “I think it’s really heavy,” McGinnis said at the time. “The feeling is, ‘Oh wow, all these things are changing, my internship is now remote. How will that change my experience?’”

As students fled campus and returned home, Susan Kirkman Zake, professor in the School of Media and Journalism and faculty advisor to the student-run news outlets, was polishing her antidote to McGinnis’ anxieties. By June 2020, Zake had created the Collaborative NewsLab at Kent State University, an experimental learning environment that connects student reporters with outside professional partners.

Using a private donation and a $7,500 grant she secured from the Scripps Howard Foundation, she and Kevin Dilley, director of student media, would pay seven hungry—and COVID-depressed—student journalists, including Maria McGinnis, to write in-demand news for outside sources while earning internship credit. “Some students already had earned the required hours in a previous semester; others are eligible to apply for internship credit via their NewsLab work.” NewsLab would also help new digital publications like The Portager.

“I’m a student broker,” Zake says about her role. “I’m trying to find good professional outlets or good professional partners so that my students can do a higher level of work.”

In addition to Zake’s senior-level practicum course, where students typically work on semester-long multimedia projects with area editors, NewsLab offers an alternative to entry-level duties such as fact-checking, writing news briefs and redirecting phone calls to editors. Instead, Zake says NewsLab is “a pipeline builder,” a way of working with local editors, instead of “just working for them. It’s a way of getting the students more job ready before they actually apply for their first real jobs.”

With a severe shift in work formats, more journalists are freelancing than ever before. (The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports a 2% drop in the freelance unemployment rate since 2014.)

Though Zake isn’t teaching the School of Media and Journalism’s new class on freelancing in Spring Semester 2022—professor Jacqueline Marino, BA ’94, will teach that—she encourages NewsLab hires, like McGinnis and senior Zaria Johnson, to make the most of their work relationships. Johnson, a recent editor of The Kent Stater, has turned a NewsLab summer environmental justice initiative with The Land (a local news startup in Cleveland) into a part-time freelancing gig. McGinnis finished an internship with The Land in June and continues to freelance for other digital media sites like The Portager. Still, out of either her own propensity for work or the demands of the industry, she feels somewhat incomplete. “Even being so busy, I feel like I’m still not doing enough,” she says. “It’s a weird way to feel.”

The NewsLab hired 10 journalism students in summer 2021, with funding from the Cleveland, Gund and Scripps Howard foundations, as well as internal funding from the School of Media and Journalism and the College of Communication and Information, and money from student media’s budget. Two interns were unpaid, since they needed the credit and couldn’t afford an internship on their own—Zake added them into NewsLab so they could stay on track for graduation. Zake would like to increase the intern base in summer 2022, if they can get additional funding from grant foundations and new donors. She’d also like to increase the current $10-$12-an-hour pay, while making unpaid internships pass by 2023.

“ar is the goal to keep students from working in fast food,” Zake says, smiling, “and pay them well.”

WKSU AND IDEASTREAM PUBLIC MEDIA

It is indefensible. Ever since the presidential election of 2016, more Americans have less trust in their news sources. In June, the Pew Research Center confirmed this decline: 18% fewer adults trust national media than did five years ago. And 7% fewer trust local media.

So how does a public radio station like WKSU handle such issues of trust? Put some seeds of story creation in the hands of listeners, says Wendy Turner, former general manager and executive director of WKSU, who was recently named the first general manager of Ohio public media services for Ideastream Public Media.

“Decades ago, it was just editors and reporters making pitches,” Turner says. “It was always, ‘The newsroom decides what the public needs to know.’ Now, we’re more like, ‘Let’s ask our audience what they want to know.’”

Turner’s role changed in October 2021, after Kent State University entered into a public service operating agreement with Ideastream Public Media for the management and operations of WKSU and its sister stations. (Kent State University still retains FCC licensing for the WKSU stations.)

Under the agreement, Ideastream Public Media assumed operations for WKSU on Oct. 1, 2021. In 2022, WKSU will become the sole NPR news and information station in Northeast Ohio, while Ideastream Public Media’s WCIN will shift to expand classical music service.

“This partnership is building on decades of award-winning journalism from two of the region’s leaders in news and information,” Turner wrote in an email to WKSU fans. “It’s a change that will benefit more than 3.5 million people in the community. The decision to pursue this agreement was reinforced by an analysis supported by the Corporation for Public
According to Wendy Turner, while print took a hard hit during the pandemic, interest in public radio increased dramatically. WKSU, one of the oldest radio stations in the country, and the recently renamed Ideastream Broadcasting, are examples of public media organizations that have seen increased engagement due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Turner credits the rise in listenership to the need for local information and community connection during times of crisis.

**Wendy Turner**

“Opportunity to greatly expand the reach and impact of our shared services.”

A Zanesville, Ohio, native, Jenkins advocated to have Google fund an experimental news site in Youngstown, Ohio, that would focus on local news. The site, Mahoning Matters, was launched in 2019 as a startup to fill the gaps left by waning print newspapers. Jenkins, who was previously the news director at WKSU, a public radio station in northeastern Ohio, worked with a team of journalists to create a news site that would serve the community.

**Mandy Jenkins**

“What happens when your trusty hometown newspaper implodes, lays off all remaining staff, and leaves all coverage to another newspaper 20 miles up the road?”

The project, which was shut down at the end of August 2020, was launched in response to the closure of Youngstown's only daily newspaper, The Vindicator, in 2019. Jenkins and her team created a new platform to serve the community with local news and information, and it quickly gained a following.

**Mandy, Jenkins, BS ‘02, MA ‘04**

“It was pure outsiderism. At least until readers found out that we were all from here originally.”

As with other startups aiming to fill gaps left by waning print newspapers, Mahoning Matters faced challenges in establishing trust and credibility with its audience. Jenkins and her team had to work hard to build a reputation for reliable, locally focused news coverage. They focused on engaging with the community through social media and other channels to understand their needs and preferences.

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Kent State University launched the public phase of a $350 million comprehensive fundraising campaign Saturday, Oct. 2, during a special halftime announcement at the Homecoming football game. Campaign co-chairs Sandra C. and Lawrence B. Armstrong, BS ‘79, BA’80, joined Kent State President Todd Diacon to publicly unveil Forever Brighter to thousands of alumni, donors and friends.

“We are consistently recognized nationally for our success in graduating more students,” Diacon said. “Our graduation rate is already the highest in northern Ohio and the fourth highest in the state among universities, but we won’t rest until all students we enroll graduate with the skills to succeed in their communities.”

To date, more than $311 million has been raised toward the $350 million goal during the quiet phase of the Forever Brighter campaign, which focuses on three key areas: prioritizing student success, expanding university initiatives and building the future. Within each of these areas are specific projects, programs and initiatives to enhance student experiences and elevate Kent State’s reputation as a leader in student support, athletics, research and innovation—both nationally and internationally.

“It is a special time at Kent State University,” Sandra Armstrong said. “For too long, our alma mater had been a hidden gem amongst higher education institutions. Now, our reputation is strong, our rankings are soaring and our students are learning how to harness their passions to find their purpose in life.”

“We are launching into a new era at Kent State, and we are so proud to co-chair this transformational campaign,” Lawrence Armstrong added. “We have been given the opportunity to fund scholarships and new programs for deserving students—and there is no more rewarding feeling for us than changing the course of our students’ lives in a positive and encouraging way. We call on all alumni and friends to join us in this effort to build a brighter future for Kent State.”

This is a campaign for everyone, says Valoree Vargo, Kent State’s vice president for philanthropy and alumni engagement. “Whether you can give $100 to be used for a last Dollar Scholarship to enable a student to pay their final bill and make it to graduation or you can give millions of dollars to endow a professorship, every dollar is focused on the success of our hardworking and talented students.

“Our donors are truly transforming lives of students who need their support now more than ever. Our campaign tagline is ‘At Kent State, what sets us apart is how we come together.’ It’s that spirit that will propel us forward in this effort to leave the university and the lives of our students Forever Brighter.”

Learn more HTTPS://WWW.KENT.EDU/FOREVERBRIGHTER

“Philanthropy is key to illuminating a brighter future for our students and their communities.” —President Todd Diacon

HERE ARE SOME HIGHLIGHTS OF THE CAMPAIGN’S THREE PRIMARY PRIORITIES:

PRIORITIZING STUDENT SUCCESS

Raising funds to align with scholarship needs enables the university to support students from the day they receive their letter of acceptance to the day they receive their degree. Scholarships assist students by:

- Ensuring access to a Kent State education for all students, regardless of their financial situation.
- Rewarding the highest-achieving students with additional support.
- Providing high-impact experiences and study-away opportunities to elevate career readiness.
- Fostering and supporting students as they complete a degree.

By the Numbers:

- 32% of the Class of 2024 is first-generation
- 572 is the number of Honors College freshmen
- 82% of students need financial assistance to attain degrees
- 30% of first-year students are eligible for the federal Pell Grant

Goal: To raise $100 million to provide scholarship support for students.

“Students from backgrounds like mine are not supposed to make it to college. Some say we are forever bound to the environment we grew up in.” —JOHN MCDERMOTT, BA ’20, accounting major, scholarship recipient and first in his family to continue his education beyond middle school. Since graduating from Kent State, he has completed a master’s degree and is employed as an accountant at Deloitte Cleveland.
Brain Health

The Brain Health Research Institute (BHRI) is a collaborative effort that taps passionate faculty members from across Kent State University—not just in science-based departments, but also in social sciences and humanities—to combine their unique strengths as they collaborate to solve brain-related challenges. The institute is the epicenter of training for undergraduate students, graduate students and postdoctoral fellows in an environment that thrives on hands-on access, mentorship, resources and opportunities.

By the Numbers:

- 25 Brain Health Research Institute undergraduate fellows
- 176 student participants
- 17 grant awardees

Goal: To elevate the profile of neuroscience and bring together people from different disciplines to expand discoveries in preventing and treating brain disease.

“This has been a great opportunity to do research, and I plan on having my own research lab once I graduate.”

—NATHAN RITCHEY, mathematics and neuroscience major, Brain Health Research Institute fellow, capstone project: “Increasing Quality of Life for Spinal Cord Injury.”

Design Innovation

The Design Innovation (DI) initiative focuses on developing solutions by reaching across academic fields and partnering with industry to enhance collaboration, communication and intellectual resources to help students become creative, intersectional problem-solvers. Coursework and co-curricular projects, competitions, hackathons and other events create a powerful and diverse community of fearless collaborators in the face of complex problems.

By the Numbers:

- 30 DI nodes (makerspaces and resource laboratories) across Kent State campuses
- 28 DI fellows
- 1 DI Hub

Goal: To leverage and elevate the entire Design Innovation Ecosystem to create a powerful and diverse community of creative, intersectional problem-solvers.

“I was excited about the biology aspect of the course because I was not familiar with integrating biology and fashion for the purpose of creating an innovative product.”

—JANDA VAN DYK, BFA ‘22, Fashion design major, one of a team of Kent State biology and fashion design students that received the Outstanding Sciences Award from the BioDesign Challenge Summit 2020. The fashion industry currently uses synthetic dyes to create the color black, so the team worked with bacteria to create an eco-friendly replacement.

EXPANDING UNIVERSITY INITIATIVES

During the last few decades, Kent State has gone from an academic, athletic and economic driver in Northeast Ohio to a thought-starter, force competitor and innovation leader at the national and international levels. Research and programmatic additions to the university—such as the following—have elevated the university’s reputation and cemented its place on the world stage:

Brain Health

By the Numbers:

- 25 Brain Health Research Institute undergraduate fellows

Goal: To elevate the profile of neuroscience and bring together people from different disciplines to expand discoveries in preventing and treating brain disease.

“This model is an explicit example of how cross-disciplinary work is essential to holistically examine the processes that lead to improved safety outcomes.”

—SARAH BAYRAMZADEH, PhD, coordinator of and Elliot Professor in the Healthcare Design Program at Kent State’s College of Architecture and Environmental Design, was awarded a $2.47 million grant to improve efficient care in Level 1 trauma room design. The project brings together a team of researchers from Kent State and Cleveland Clinic Akron General Hospital for the next four years.

Employee Talent

Kent State University’s rising stature among the nation’s best research institutions depends on the success and achievements of its employees. Perpetual support allows faculty, administrators and staff to advance their work, assist in research, purchase equipment and push the boundaries of the unknown for generations to come.

By the Numbers:

- 5,000+ employees work across Kent State’s eight campus system
- 17 faculty positions are endowed
- 12+ is the average for years of service by Kent State employees

Goal: To double the number of endowed chairs, professorships and other positions across the eight-campus system and provide perpetual support for the university’s most distinguished employees and their corresponding work.

“I would not have been able to complete my college journey without my scholarships, and for that, I will be forever grateful.”

—Vanessa Vodan, BS ’20

Employee Talent

Intercollegiate Athletics

Kent State Athletics’ vision is to be a nationally recognized, comprehensive athletics program that inspires communities and transforms lives. The landscape of Division I intercollegiate athletics is changing constantly and the need for resources is at an all-time high. Philanthropy is integral to the program’s innovative mindset in resource management, with a focus on sustainability and sound financial stewardship. More resources are needed to focus on its mission to win championships and graduate student-athletes who are prepared for life after sport.

By the Numbers:

- $6.1 million in scholarships awarded annually
- 476+ student-athletes
- 81 athletics endowments
- 19 varsity sports
- 19 straight semesters with department grade point averages of 3.0+

Goal: To increase the number of athletics endowments by 20%.

“My goal is to become an audiologist and work in a hospital setting or work with children in an elementary school. I would not have been able to complete my college journey without my scholarships, and for that, I will be forever grateful.”

—Vanessa Vodan, BS ’20, softball, track and field, speech and pathology major, winner of the 2020 Judith K. Devine Award for excellence in leadership in all facets of college life.
Kent State’s vision is to be a magnet for talented students who want to change the world and a flagship for faculty and staff who have the talent to lead such a bold initiative. To achieve this, its physical spaces must match the innovative and transformative experiences taking place across its educational system. New and updated facilities for the Ambassador Crawford College of Business and Entrepreneurship and the College of Aeronautics and Engineering will lay a foundation for what is possible when physical spaces accurately reflect stellar programs.

**Building the Future**

By the Numbers:

- **Goal:** To complete projected funding for the engineering wing expansion that will add 44,000 square feet to the existing building. External funding of $12 million has been committed, and $6 million more is needed to reach the total estimated cost of $18 million.

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Cell of Aeronautics and Engineering

The College of Aeronautics and Engineering (CAE) has grown in both size and stature in recent years. With the addition of notable faculty and related research funding, the college’s impact on future industries will be remarkable. Passionate students experience immersive instruction that will prepare them to compete in a rapidly changing global economy. The college’s academic program is supported by cutting-edge research and state-of-the-industry facilities designed to prepare students in the fields of aerospace engineering, mechatronics engineering and cybersecurity engineering, all of which are vital to business, manufacturing and aviation.

**By the Numbers:**

- **$2.6 million** is awarded in scholarships
- **83%** of students receive scholarships
- **29%** of freshmen are first-generation students
- **3%** is the increase in women in enrollment
- **3%** is the increase in underrepresented enrollment
- **4X** is the amount of growth in research

**Goal:** To complete projected funding for the engineering wing expansion that will add 44,000 square feet to the existing building. External funding of $12 million has been committed, and $6 million more is needed to reach the total estimated cost of $18 million.

- **Michael Parker, BS ’20, mechatronics engineering/mechatronics engineering technology. As president of the Kent State Robotics Club, he attended the NASA Robotics Mining competition held at the Kennedy Space Center. One of his internships was with The Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co. doing process development with its innovation team. He has been a mechatronics engineer with Goodyear since graduation.**

"Joining the robotics team had the biggest impact on my career. I had the opportunity to learn and experience so much by being involved with the organization."

There are many ways you can transform the lives of our students with your generosity. Philanthropic gifts enhance academic excellence and innovation, expand breakthrough research and provide contemporary, high-tech facilities for learning, study and research. Together we are a force for the future—and a source for good. Together we will make the world Forever Brighter. Help us achieve our goal of raising $350 million to support our students.

**Here’s how you can give:**

- Cash, checks, credit card, PayPal
- Gifts of securities
- Real estate
- Gift planning
- Payroll deduction
- Matching gifts

After graduating with a Bachelor of Science in psychology from Brown in 2007, Brager set out to earn a PhD in neuroscience. She wanted to learn more about the relationship between sleep and brain function. And she was particularly interested in circadian rhythms (physical, mental and behavioral changes that follow a sleep-wake cycle and repeat roughly every 24 hours) and how neurotransmitters (such as serotonin and dopamine released during exercise) play a role in sleep.

“I wanted to work with the world’s leading expert; that’s why I went to Kent State,” Brager says. That expert is J. David Glass, PhD, now Professor Emeritus of Biological Sciences, who has been with the university since 1983. He ran The Circadian Rhythm Laboratory, which focuses on the neurobiology of mammalian biological rhythms. One aim of his research is to study the effects of ethanol (also called alcohol) on the circadian rhythm timing system. Alcohol use and withdrawal have profound effects on circadian rhythms and sleep.

As a graduate student, Brager was one of the first authors with Glass on several high-impact papers, including a 2009 research paper that reported how chronic alcohol consumption altered nocturnal activity patterns in hamsters and suggested a mode for the disruptive effect of alcohol abuse on human circadian rhythms. This was the basis for her prestigious predoctoral National Institutes of Health research award.

After earning a PhD at Kent State, Brager served as a postdoctoral research fellow in the Neuroscience Institute at Morehouse School of Medicine in Atlanta. During her postdoctoral work, she wrote Meathead: Unraveling the Athletic Brain (Westbow Press, 2015), a popular science book debunking the “dumb jock” myth and focused on using neuroscience to enhance athletic performance and recovery. She also has written more than 30 peer-reviewed papers, numerous op-ed and column pieces for professional societies and has co-authored the first edition of the NCAA student-athlete mental health handbook.

In 2016, Brager joined Walter Reed Army Institute of Research as a National Research Council Fellow. A year later, she became a commissioned Army officer to support sleep.
and human performance research and development as one of the few active duty neuroscientists. She served as chief of the institute’s Sleep Research Center until June 2019. She also sits on fatigue management working groups for the Office of the Army Surgeon General, the United States government and NATO.

During the pandemic, Brager served as chief of the COVID-19 Response Laboratory at the Javis Center, which had been converted into an auxiliary medical center in the worst of the New York City crisis. She was responsible for securing scarce medical supplies to treat those who fell ill.

Brager currently is director of human performance operations and outreach education for the U.S. Army Warrior Fitness Training Center in Fort Knox, Kentucky. Her mission is to support the elite athletic endeavors of active duty soldiers and future research and development of human performance technology and training programs. As an Army neuroscientist, Brager studies resilience to environmental stressors such as exercise, jet lag and sleep deprivation, all of which are realities for many soldiers. Her research includes studying why some individuals are resilient and others vulnerable under such conditions.

“In order to develop and test new ideas in the lab, we have to understand what it looks like in real life,” says Brager, who has traveled to collect data in realistic settings for the military. “Basically, what I’m asked to do is to develop tools and technologies—based on the principles of biology and military—to help service people adjust to time zones very rapidly.

“Tactical napping is what the cool kids do,” she adds. “It’s also about finding new biological tools to develop and test new ideas in the lab, we have to understand what it looks like in real life.”

While it may seem counterintuitive, Brager’s commitment to sleep hasn’t lessened the drive to compete that has been ingrained in her since she was a child. In fact, she credits her continued good health to her commitment to sleep. Obviously, I’m biased, but sleep is right up there with exercise, even on the road—and, of course, to sleep. Brager studies resilience to environmental stressors such as exercise, jet lag and sleep deprivation, all of which are realities for many soldiers. Her research includes studying why some individuals are resilient and others vulnerable under such conditions. Inadequate sleep (less than seven hours a night) can contribute to mental health disorders, physical illness and compromised military effectiveness.

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“We’re constantly searching for some new function of sleep,” she adds. “It’s also about finding new biological factors that can be tweaked in some way, in order to have humans perform at a higher level under stress in less-than-optimal conditions.”

According to a recent Defense Department report to Congress, active-duty service members suffer from sleep deprivation at a rate roughly twice that of the civilian population. Inadequate sleep (less than seven hours a night) can contribute to mental health disorders, physical illness and compromised military effectiveness. The report describes it as “a reduced ability to execute complex cognitive tasks, communicate effectively, quickly make appropriate decisions, maintain vigilance and sustain a level of alertness required to carry out assigned duties.”

In high-stress environments such as deployment, soldiers may not get adequate sleep, even though they need it to rest and recover. “It’s not until the stress has subsided that fatigue sets in, and that is where danger and loss of life are most imminent as a result,” Brager explains. “Our HPA axis [the interaction between the hypothalamus, pituitary gland and adrenal glands that activates the body’s stress response] has this uncanny ability to keep us awake and alert for extended periods of time, but the crash is unbearable.”

With her background and expertise, Brager helps soldiers develop better sleep habits and routines. She also determines whether naps on duty day, referred to as tactical napping, are advisable. She even identifies those select few individuals who possess the short sleep gene or are extreme morning risers, which are determined by genetics—and quite rare. Those soldiers can be placed on missions and in environments where sleep is limited because they can withstand the effects better than others.

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While it may seem counterintuitive, Brager’s commitment to sleep hasn’t lessened the drive to compete that has been ingrained in her since she was a child. In fact, it could be what fuels it. In addition to serving as a scientist and soldier, Brager is an elite athlete. In 2017, she competed in the 10th Gay Games in Paris, where she won eight gold medals and one silver medal in track and field. She’s also a two-time CrossFit Games competitor and competes regionally as well.

“I try to be as efficient as possible in terms of getting my workout in appropriately,” says Brager, who traveled almost 150,000 miles and stayed in hotels for 264 days in 2019. She credits her continued good health to her commitment to exercise, even on the road—and, of course, to sleep.

“One of the classic principles of biology is the idea of homeostasis,” Brager says. “If you overtired something, it requires a period of rest in order to get the system back to normal.

“I really do attribute a lot of my success to sleep. Obviously, I’m biased, but sleep is right up there with hydration, food, and all the other basic survival mechanisms.”

Inadequate sleep (less than seven hours a night) can contribute to mental health disorders, physical illness and compromised military effectiveness.
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 this is the year 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. Jason 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 learned 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, arts and crafts, 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 Randale L. Richmond, Kent State’s 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/run.

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 Randale 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 10:30 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 drinks in the parking lot outside of Dix Stadium.

11. Randale 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. Jaci Caples and Andrew Pello 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. Pello is an environmental conservation bio major sponsored by Phi Delta Theta fraternity. They are pictured with 20200 homecoming royalty, Annamaria GTA, 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 184 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 Stanner Victory Bell at Dix Stadium after beating the Bowling Green State University 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.

“It was great to welcome alumni and friends home to make new memories and take part in many favorite homecoming traditions.”

—Valoree Vargo
I walked door to door through our neighborhood of largely first-generation residents. Our mission was to build a positive vision with our neighbors about the newly formed United Nations. I still remember my sense of excitement about the idea that different nations could come together in peace, so many of the world’s problems would be solved! “My many decades as an educator and community volunteer started with a KSU scholarship in 1948. [Those decades included] nearly 40 years in the Akron Public Schools, where I held positions ranging from teacher and counselor to principal and psychologist. Fourteen years more followed in the private-school sector, where I was hired as director of the upper-school program at a well-known Cleveland academy. It was also during this time that I began working with both individuals and families in my own private office as a licensed psychologist. “In closing, it is with a grateful heart that I recall the inspirations from some of the distinguished KSU Faculty—Dr. Mona Fletcher, Dr. Pipa and Dr. Donald Wonderly.” Feaster and her husband, William Feaster, BA ’51, established the Elizabeth and Bill Feaster Undergraduate Scholarship in Literacy at Kent State. It is based on her belief that early intervention in reading and language has the most profound effects on children. Many studies have shown that improving children’s reading competency by the time they are 8 builds a solid foundation for success later in life and is often the key to eliminating poverty.

Allan G. Kaupinen, BBA ’75, Alexandria, VA, presented a bust of his former Golden Flashes football teammates, Jack Ritchie, BFA ’56, to the US Coast Guard in June 2021. The bust will be on display in Florida and will be installed in the future National Coast Guard Museum to be built in Connecticut.

During the Vietnam War, LT. Ritchie was a Coast Guard aviator serving in Vietnam on exchange with the Air Force. On June 9, 1966, he piloted the F-101 with his crew and the USAF F-101 crew member to rescue a Marine Corps pilot who had been shot down near the Laotian border. During the mission, bullets struck Ritchie’s helicopter, causing ills. As he attempted to set down in a nearby clearing, the helicopter lost altitude and exploded as it hit the ground. Ritchie was the first Coast Guardman killed in action during the Vietnam War. His remains and those of his crew were recovered in 2002, and he was buried with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery in 2003.

In his time at Kent State, Ritchie was captain of the football and track teams. He is remembered for his 90-yard touchdown run against Bowling Green that propelled Kent State into its first bowl game, the 1954 Macomb Bowl. After graduation, Ritchie began his military career as a second lieutenant, he became a captain in the US Army Strategic Communications Command. He moved to Washington, DC, in 1966, where he established himself as a political leader and advocate for veterans and Latino Americans.
extend Cranbrook’s legacy as a leading center for innovation and outlined a master plan that will continue to support the work of The Community House of the Educational Community, was recognized as a leader in real estate development. The Words Matter news report on WCPO 9 in June 2021—35 years after students, researchers and anyone with an interest in history. For more information, see https://ohiolesbianarchives.wordpress.com.

Patrick had attended Allied Education as a child and was a principal at the school for 24 years. She introduced many of the after-school activities and cultural celebrations the school still enjoys. She had helped many of the teachers, started the Leila Green Alliance of Black School Educators and serves as the chairperson of the longest Martin Luther King Jr. celebration in Ohio.

She became principal at Hartford Middle School in 2004 and retired in 2010. In 2005, she became a substitute principal and classroom teacher. In 2007, she has served as a core substitute at Lehman Middle School. Patrick has amassed more than 25 awards and recognitions for her dedication to education and the community, including the Ohio State Educators Award, the Ohio Humanitarian Award and Kent State’s 2020 Hall of Fame Distinguished Alumni Award. Patrick Cormany’s residence, she will also work with the Office of Mass Communication. As a professional-in-residence, she plans to preserve the important traditions established by the university. She has served as a vice president of credit. He retired in December 2021, served as senior credit officer of National City Bank.

Before becoming chief communications officer for the Cleveland Clinic, Lucht was appointed to the Board of Directors of the Brown & Williamson Tobacco Company in Frankfort, Kentucky, and has taught history at Big Sandy Community and Technical College in Prestonsburg, Kentucky, since 1983.

He had served as an attorney for a New York City firm and as vice president for a management consulting company. He has a 20-year history with the firm.

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She has been recognized as one of 100 Women of the Century. She is a life member of the U.S. Army and Air National Guard. She is a graduate of the University of Tennessee and the Ohio State University.

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Douglas Baldwin, BBA '81, Dolle, VA. 4, a 41-year veteran of the US Postal Service, was appointed deputy postmaster general, reporting directly to Postal Service Chief Executive Officer. He had served as a member of the Postal Service’s Board of Governors and continues in his current role as chief human resource officer.

She will ensure that the organization’s culture, talent, labor relations and leadership development will contribute to the successful implementation of the 10-year plan unveiled on March 23, 2021, to restore service excellence and financial sustainability. The firm is housed in an 1865 former courthouse and is a member of the State of Ohio’s Historical Society.

Vickie Deane, BBA ’81, Santa Fe, NM, painter and jeweler, moved to New Mexico in the 1980s and started making jewelry about 15 years ago. In addition to continuing to paint Post-COVID, she traveled the country for art markets and fairs. She now sells her work at the Fuller Lodge Art Center in the town of Taos, the Georgia O’Keeffe Gallery in Santa Fe, the Fine Arts Museum in Albuquerque and the Harwood Institute in Taos. She’s not going back on the road for now but plans to attend local events when they start up again. See https://www.vickiedeanenmjewelry.com.

Rinku Dutt, BS ’81, Murpville, PA, ophthalmologist, now provides glaucoma treatment and other services at Luna Vision, an eye care center and medical spa based in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Dutt is a board-certified member of the American Academy of Ophthalmology, the American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgeons, and the Pennsylvania Academy of Ophthalmology. Prior to his career in glaucoma treatment, he has more than 10 years of experience.

She received a PhD in educational administration. From the Tulane Medical Center. She has worked in real estate development.

She is an eyewitness and survivor of the shooting at Kent State, where a police officer and an unarmed National Guard member were killed. She is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania and the Ohio State University.

She has been recognized as one of 100 Women of the Century. She is a leader in real estate development. The Words Matter news report on WCPO 9 in June 2021—35 years after students, researchers and anyone with an interest in history. For more information, see https://ohiolesbianarchives.wordpress.com.

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Loma Hernandez Jarvis, MA '90, PhD '93, Spokane WA, was named the first vice president for institutional equity and diversity at the University of Portland, effective July 1, 2021. She previously served as chief diversity officer and associate vice president for diversity, equity, and inclusion at Wilmington University in Spokane. She also served on the Spokane Human Rights Commission, the College Success Foundation Regional Board and the Hispanic Business and Professionals Association.

A community activist, Hernandez Jarvis has an extensive background in intergroup dialogue, has conducted and published research on group processes and psychological well-being in adolescents, and is a published author in the field of semantic development in young children, bilingualism and bilingual education.

Brian Schubert, BSE '80, Bellevue, OH, retired after 16 years as the athletic director at Bellevue High School. A 1986 Bellevue graduate and one-time athletic director at Bellevue for many years and Schubert, a 1986 Bellevue graduate and one-time athletic director at Bellevue for many years and Schubert, a 1986 Bellevue graduate and one-time athletic director at Bellevue for many years and Schubert, a 1986 Bellevue graduate and one-time athletic director at Bellevue for many years and Schubert, a 1986 Bellevue graduate and one-time athletic director at Bellevue for many years and Schubert, a 1986 Bellevue graduate and one-time athletic director at Bellevue for many years and Schubert, a 1986 Bellevue graduate and one-time athletic director at Bellevue for many years and Schubert, a 1986 Bellevue graduate and one-time athletic director at Bellevue for many years and Schubert, a 1986 Bellevue graduate and one-time athletic director at Bellevue for many years and Schubert, a 1986 Bellevue graduate and one-time athletic director at Bellevue for many years and Schubert, a 1986 Bellevue graduate and one-time athletic director at Bellevue for many years and Schubert, a 1986 Bellevue graduate and one-time athletic director at Bellevue for many years and Schubert, a 1986 Bellevue graduate and one-time athletic director at Bellevue for many years and Schubert, a 1986 Bellevue graduate and one-time athletic director at Bellevue for many years and Schubert, a 1986 Bellevue graduate and one-time athletic director at Bellevue for many years and Schubert, a 1986 Bellevue graduate and one-time athletic director at Bellevue for many years and Schubert, a 1986 Bellevue graduate and one-time athletic director at Bellevue for many years and Schubert, a 1986 Bellevue graduate and one-time athletic director at Bellevue for many years and Schubert, a 1986 Bellevue graduate and one-time athletic director at Bellevue for many years and Schubert, a 1986 Bellevue graduate and one-time athletic director at Bellevue for many years and Schubert, a 1986 Bellevue graduate and one-time athletic director at Bellevue for many years and Schubert, a 1986 Bellevue graduate and one-time athletic director at Bellevue for many years and Schubert, a 1986 Bellevue graduate and one-time athletic director at Bellevue for many years and Schubert, a 1986 Bellevue graduate and one-time athletic director at Belle
47, a 59 and so on. And then it was over—and with it the uncertainty of life to the May 4 shootings. And many years later, when the May 4 Visitors we took multiple early hits. Two No. 2s, a 10, a 23, a 30, two 35s (twins), a ATO group photo, 1970 graduation, and every guy on every campus across the country awaited feeling before a big game. At the Alpha Tau Omega party, we tacked a white beer flowed as the numbers rolled. The atmosphere was charged, like the occasion to party. At Kent State dorms, apartments and fraternity houses, Alpha Tau Omega 50th Reunion | KENT STATE MAGAZINE FALL/WINTER 2021-22 |

“Little did we know that five months later school would close due to COVID-19. Since it was just weeks before Christmas, one of our brothers, who was a financial analyst, was stranded at home in Jacksonville, FL. "I was able to work remotely until the last few days before the school closed." he said. "I was able to work from home and still be productive.""

“During the weekend, one thing stood out for us all—once we reconnected, it was like time had never passed. We just picked up where we left off and when it was all over, everyone agreed that 50 years was too long between reunions and we should do it again.”

Ray Gargano, BSE ’83, Cincinnati, OH, was named vice president of community investment at Arrowhead, the nation’s largest community arts campaign and the greatest source of local arts funding for many organizations. Working closely with businesses, civic and arts stakeholders, Gargano will lead the grantmaking process and help Arrowhead advance its 10-year blueprint for Collective Action, a strategy used for allocating and evaluating its funding investments.

“Strong funding for the arts has allowed Cincinnati to become a national draw and regional asset. Arrowhead will manage $7 million the city has allocated to support performing arts organizations and public performances and invest as part of the American Rescue Plan. Recently, Gargano was the grants program officer for the city of Sacramento, where he worked to advance cultural diversity, equity, inclusion and access initiatives, including the management and distribution of $10 million through CARES Act funding.

Lillian Kur, BS ’83, BACR ’94, Cleveland, OH, was promoted to the newly created position of executive vice president and chief operating officer of the Cleveland Foundation, effective March 1, 2021. In this role, Kur, a 14-year veteran of the foundation, oversees day-to-day operations of the foundation’s headquarters and development of a new strategic plan, designed in partnership with the community as part of the foundation’s upcoming move to the intersection of the Midtown corridor and Hough neighborhood. She also serves as the vice chair of Cleveland’s Planning Commission.

Multa Leema, MA ’93, PHD ’94, Savannah, GA, professor of mathematics at Savannah State University, was honored as a top decorated mathematical researcher by Marquis Who’s Who in 2020—his 10th award as an educator. His number of publications has increased to 40, and he says his success is a result of his education at Kent State.

According to Leema, her goal is “to expand research activities by working with my students and encouraging them to go to graduate school. I am highly committed to improve the representation of African Americans in mathematics.”

Karen Patterson, BSE ’73, MED ’95, PHD ’03, Jacksonville, FL, was named provost and vice president of academic affairs at the University of North Florida, effective April 17, 2021.
Patterson oversees an integrated academic affairs, student affairs and enrollment management structure as part of the University President David Stysmany’s senior leadership team. Patterson co-chairs UH’s Commission on Diversity and Inclusion. She is a former chair of the Department of Exceptional, Deaf and Interpreter Education and is an Outstanding Teaching Award recipient. She started at UH in 1999, serving in roles that include associate vice president for faculty development, leading the Office of Faculty Enhancement, dean of undergraduate studies and associate vice president for faculty resources.

Her research focuses on improving practices for underserved students, college students with disabilities, collaborative partnerships and parental involvement for students at risk for failure.

Curtis Searcy, BBA ’94, St. Louis, MO, was named president of the Trust and Family Office Board of Directors. He is responsible for establishing strategic direction, building a high-performing division, attracting top talent and supporting existing team members as they develop their skills and expertise. He also serves on the Parkside board of directors.

Searcy previously served as market leader, senior vice president, for US Bank Private Wealth Management in St. Louis. He earned an MBA from Eastern Kentucky University in 2001 and is a certified financial planner.

Karen Eck, MA ’95, PhD ’98, Norfolk, VA, assistant vice president for research at Old Dominion University, has been named a 2021 Fellow of the National Organization of Research Development Professionals, in recognition of her significant contributions to their professional mentoring program over the past seven years. A NORDP Fellow is the organization’s highest professional distinction and only 4% of NORDP members are annually named. Eck has been a member of NORDP for 11 years, serving as president of DrP 2011-2013 and co-chair of the strategic alliances committee. In 2000, she helped launch NORDP onto the international stage when it gained membership in the International Network of Research Management Societies.

Heather Gooch, BS ’95, Seville, OH, has been promoted to editor-in-chief of Pest Management, a business-to-business brand she has served as editorial assistant and has been promoted to editor-in-chief of the magazine.

Vice President for Administration and Finance Jennifer (Sanftner) McGraw, MA ’96, PhD ’99, Ashtabula, has been named president of the Trust and Family Office Board of Directors. She also is chair of the psychology department and directs the department’s internship program. Ashtabula Metropolitan Housing Authority and a retired greater at Quaker Funeral Services, where she worked until two years ago. She is a retired substitute aid at Buckeye Local Schools and a substitute lunch aid at Ashtabula Area City Schools. She serves as director of Christian education at People’s Baptist Church.

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Boys that tackles big subjects like homophobia, special——part of Iowa Press, April 2021). As one reviewer (University The Cleveland Heights LGBTQ registered architect with LEED Building Design + has led to better institutional practices. and staff navigate challenges together, but also says the establishment of affinity groups at those improved hiring practices of faculty and staff. He Marquette University. in positions related to equity, inclusion and higher education and college student personnel bachelor's in African American community and of Minority Student Affairs, today called the of deer, bear, squirrel and a pair of rabbits. After earning undergraduate and graduate degree in criminal justice from Kent State, Caraselli worked with the Violence Assistance Program of Summit County and then full time for Stark County Adult Probation. She was Next as a juvenile parole agent in the Cleveland Play House, where she was part of the team to develop and implement the Compassionate Arts Reach Education program. She managed community campaigns such as Say Yes Cleveland and and has had a presence in South Shaker Hills. She also worked Cleveland Play House’s last virtual play of the season, black

A similar figure, “Rocket Rabbit,” won the Grand Award in the Arkansas Arts Center’s 2020 Assistance Program of Summit County and then Carosello worked part time for the Victim program has been with Tecta for nearly 15 of his 25 years in the roofing company based in Rosemont, Illinois. It was promoted to president and chief executive officer in 2013 as director of service. Following his graduation from VCU with a bachelor’s in African American community and cultural studies, he joined Whitacre in 2003 as chief operating officer. He now directs operations and resources for the institution, serves as head of the grand staff of the Cleveland Play House since 2015, including on the Producers Guild of America’s professional development initiatives. A certified trauma professional, Jackson also has extensive experience as a facilitator and teacher. She has helped organizations, including the Play House, Kent State and Baldwin Wallace University, with strategic planning around diversity, equity and inclusion. After graduating from Kent State, she lived and worked in New York City for 10 years. She also earned a certificate in diversity and inclusion from Cornell University. Amie Cochran, MEd ’01, MBA ’04, Sheffield Village, OH, was hired as the new vice president for finance and administration at Thiel College, following a market search process. As a resident scholar, she is member of the president’s cabinet and will be chief financial and administrative officer. She provides financial and business intelligence to the campus community and collaborate with other members of the cabinet to accomplish strategic priorities. She also provides financial and business services functions, human resources, maintenance and facilities, and information technology. Previously, she was chief financial officer and treasurer at Vocational Guidance Services in Independence, KS. Her work has also appeared in various publications and in print, including The Brooklyn Poet, Vol. 2. Black Girl Magic (Hoopla Books). She is a Pushcart Prize nominee (2016, 2017), a Best of the Net nominee (2017), a Callaloo Writers Collective, she also has presented at the AWP (2013, 2020), HippoCamp (2016–2020) and The Muse and the Marketplace (2019), among others. She has received a Creative Writing Fellowship from the Organization of Pennsylvania,美容, bear, squirrel and a pair of rabbits. Each is bribed with drawings of petals, and the things he thinks about is how he works on the figures. A similar figure, “Rocket Rabbit,” won the Grand Award in the Arkansas Arts Center’s 2020 Delta Exhibition.

Colleen Longshaw Jackson, BFA ’01, MFA ’15, Cleveland, OH, was promoted to director of the City School of Music, Art and Design, a residential school for children in grades K-12, which is part of the City of Cincinnati Public Schools. She has a bachelor’s in English from Youngstown State University and a master’s in the science of nursing with a focus on executive leadership at Saint Xavier University in Chicago. She has worked at Mahoning Health, equity, diversity and inclusion (DEI), effective June 1, 2021. She previously was the director of community partnerships for Barter Theatre, the National Theater at Cleveland Play House, where she was part of the team to develop and implement the Compassionate Arts Reach Education program. She managed community campaigns such as Say Yes Cleveland and and has had a presence in South Shaker Hills. She also worked Cleveland Play House’s last virtual play of the season, black

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athletes to two regular season conference championships as well as two conference tournament championships. In 2007, she led the team to three NCAA national tournament appearances with four NCAA All-Americans and a record of 16-1-3 at the time of her departure. She was named coach of the year twice and the Wonisport.com coach of the week on May 23, 2005.

Prior to her coaching days, she played NCAA Division I basketball at Kent State, where she was All-America Honors and was a first team all-conference student-athlete. She earned a bachelor's in education and a minor in administration, then stayed on at Kent State in a graduate assistant position while earning a master's in education.

Jordan Mincy, BBA ’19, Gainesville, Fl, was named the 17th head coach of the Jacksonville Dolphins men’s basketball team at Jacksonville University on March 25, 2021, replacing Tony Jasick.

He played college basketball at Kent State for both Jim Christian and Garco Ford. He was part of two Mid-American Conference regular season and conference tournament squads, making trips to the NCAA tournament in 2006 and 2008. He left as the all-time leader in MAC history in games played at 135, and in seventh place on the MAC career list in points scored, with 1,508 career points.

Mincy joined the staff at the University of South Carolina as a graduate assistant for the 2004-05 season before returning to his alma mater for a two-year stint as an assistant coach. In 2013, he joined the College of Charleston as a graduate assistant for one season before moving onto an assistant coaching spot at the University of Toledo. In 2014, he joined Mike Davis’ staff at Jacksonville University, followed him to the University of Florida in 2015 as an assistant coach.

John Dayo-Alli, attended Kent State 2009-2010, Akron, OH, was named the 2020/2021 Nord Family Foundation Playwright Fellow at Cleveland Public Theatre, a program for playwrights and creators from Northeast Ohio that offers readings and workshop productions.

According to a June 18, 2021, Cleveland.com article, the trio hope the brewery, with its unique setting and proximity to downtown, will become a neighborhood gathering spot that appeals to both college students and local residents with a mix of easy-drinking beers, shareable menu items and community events. The new brewery can host at least 300 people with its patio, dining area and side rooms (available for reservations).

Robert Heiser, the company’s co-founder, has worked for the company for seven years. He joined the engineering team at Crain’s Cleveland Business in 2015 with the dream of running a brewery with a focus on making super-fast casual restaurant. He also started “Feed the Nurses Challenge”—which asks users on social media to tag a local restaurant and travel to fairs and carnivals selling French fries with their mouth-watering sauce. He worked as a chef in various restaurants as a graduate student and decided to gamble on himself and build a destination foodie restaurant in what was once the Ohio City Galley.

In June 2021, O’Neill, an active member of the Junior League, also started the Food and Drink Collective, whose mission is to raise awareness and funding for charitable organizations by hosting social events that give back to local communities.
challenges them to provide lunch for their local workplaces, battling COVID-19 on the front lines or have other businesses pick up the challenge to provide lunch for their local front-line workers due to coronavirus.

In addition to her Master of Public Policy and Administration degree from Kent State, she has a Master of Social Work from The Ohio University and is a licensed social worker in the state of Ohio.

Colombian Health Services was founded in Kent, Ohio, in 1978 and offers comprehensive behavioral health, residential, employment and supportive services since 2001, with Tracy leading the effort, they have expanded to the Southeast Community Behavioral Health Clinic designation from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. It is one of the few such designations in the state, which will allow Colombian to provide fully integrated health services across six Ohio counties.

Joe Cheneyex, BS '16, ATAS '20, Akron, OH, has been promoted to director of technology at innis Maggiore, a full-service positioning ad agency active in the Cleveland area and did a presentation on television and radio advertising, he is an avid fan of the Cleveland Browns and the Indians. He moved to the United States and started his career in 2001, when he started working as a web designer.

Anthony Milia, BBA '16, Twinsburg, OH, owner of Milia Marketing LLC, was recognized as one of the “20 in Their Twenties” class of 2021 by the Cleveland Business Journal. He creates a new set of infographics and a video demonstrating the differences between a tablet and a smartphone.

Sarah Schlosser, BFA '17, Akron, OH, has been promoted to director of technology at innis Maggiore, a full-service positioning ad agency active in the Cleveland area and did a presentation on television and radio advertising, he is an avid fan of the Cleveland Browns and the Indians. He moved to the United States and started his career in 2001, when he started working as a web designer.

Joseph Oteng, MEd '17, Columbus, OH, a second-year law student at the Monte College of Law at The Ohio State University, started promoting content on Instagram about social justice issues and anti-racism in response to the killing of George Floyd on May 25, 2020. Through infographics and short videos, he explains concepts such as racial battle fatigue, white savior complex and authentic allyship.

With over 13,000 Instagram followers, he creates a new set of infographics and videos at least once a month and posts content almost every day. Organizations hire him to teach social justice workshops at schools, law firms, fraternal organizations and sororities. He gives between six and 12 lectures a month.


Brenna Parker, BS '17, Washington, DC, has been promoted to director of technology at innis Maggiore, a full-service positioning ad agency active in the Cleveland area and did a presentation on television and radio advertising, he is an avid fan of the Cleveland Browns and the Indians. He moved to the United States and started his career in 2001, when he started working as a web designer.

Sarah Schlosser, BFA '17, Twinsburg, OH, has been promoted to director of technology at innis Maggiore, a full-service positioning ad agency active in the Cleveland area and did a presentation on television and radio advertising, he is an avid fan of the Cleveland Browns and the Indians. He moved to the United States and started his career in 2001, when he started working as a web designer.
2021 Alumni Awards

Eight remarkable alumni were honored on Thursday, Sept. 30, 2021, during a Welcome Home Reception at the Kent State University Home and Conference Center. The Alumni Awards are the highest honors presented to Kent State University graduates for outstanding contributions to their chosen profession and the university.

“The nominations we received were truly impressive and represented the diversity and success of our graduates,” says Barbara Smith, BS ’64, president, Kent State Alumni Association National Board of Directors. “These eight award recipients epitomize the Golden flash spirit, and each one has made a profound impact at Kent State and in their communities.”

In addition to serving as a professor, senior fellow and senior scientist at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB), James Rapier directs the UAB 307 HIV Outpatient, Dental and Research Clinic, which treats more than 3,600 patients annually and provides compassionate and comprehensive healthcare for those living with HIV and AIDS. The clinic’s first non-physician director, Rapier serves as a mentor, advisor and educator to many graduate students who work there. During his career, he has secured more than $75 million in grant funding, which supported research and medical advancements that have touched communities across the globe. Recently, he committed to a principal gift, creating endowed funds in Kent State’s College of Nursing to support a professorship as well as research and innovation fund.

“Good deeds are contagious; when we pay it forward, we motivate others to do the same.”

Richard E. Breedon is a physicist with a focus in experimental high energy particles and is the author or co-author of more than 1,200 scientific papers. His work in experimental physics began in the Kent State mass spectrometry lab, where he designed and built a readout system to collect data from the analog mass spectrometer. He analyzed the data using a microcomputer he programmed and maintained. He found a mentor in Professor Wilbur Franklin, a liquid crystal transport theorist. Breedon has conducted research and experiments at Fermilab in Illinois, KIX in Tsukuba, Japan, and CERN in Geneva, Switzerland, where he was a founding member of the CMS experiment that led to the discovery of the Higgs boson particle in 2012. He also teaches at the University of California, Davis, and Yale-NUS College in Singapore.

“In providing direct patient care as a nurse practitioner and participating in HIV health services and outcomes research as senior scientist, I have participated in many scientific advances and their application to improve and extend the lives of people living with HIV.”

Robert E. Ross, who worked in the financial services industry before retiring in 2014, has served on the Kent State University Foundation Board since 2003. He leads the Philanthropy and Alumni Engagement Committee, and his dedication to the university is exemplified through the many connections he has fostered with alumni and donors over the years, while strengthening their ties to Kent State. He works closely to help fund charitable causes andZOOG IS THE PAST

“God I have been in a single chord with you.”

Willowick, OH

The Alumni Awards are the highest honors presented to Kent State University graduates for outstanding contributions to their chosen profession and the university.

“I believe that each of us has a responsibility to make an impact, whether through our vocation, volunteer endeavors or other contributions.”

While working for Naaim Khan, a designer and fashion house, Gordon Stumo created many stunning outfits worn by high-profile celebrities such as Mariah Carey, Celine Dion and Oprah. He now works in New York for Proper Cloth, the country’s largest custom shirting maker. As the company’s first in-house designer and patternmaker, he manages the digital pattern department and is creating the first pattern archive. He helped launch new product categories, including custom chino pants, sweatshirts, t-shirts and highly rated face masks. He also mentors fashion students from schools across the country, including Kent State.

“In his short and remarkable life, Michael built camaraderie and community across continents. He represented Kent State with enthusiasm and integrity during his many travels.”

Robert E. Ross, BBA ’70, Lake Forest, IL

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Nick Moore worked as a designer at Kent State for 31 years, through the administrations of six university presidents. Most recently, he was the creative director of the Department of University Communications and Marketing.

He served in various design positions at Kent State University from 1940–2021. As graphic designer and design production manager, he worked with his team to continuously develop, evolve and maintain the Kent community. He also was an adjunct professor at the School of Visual Communication Design in 2007.

Nick passionately loved Kent State and was a champion of the university’s noble mission. He worked with his team to continuously develop, evolve and maintain the Kent community. He also was an adjunct professor at the School of Visual Communication Design in 2007.

His coworkers greatly loved Nick for his outstanding talent and his caring heart. And he enjoyed working with and mentoring student designers, who benefited from his wealth of experience.

TRIBUTE

The Nick Moore Memorial Scholarship for Kent State students is administered by the College of Visual Communication Design (VCD) in the College of Communication and Information (CCI) was established in his memory. This scholarship honors Nick by supporting student designers established in his memory.

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I Want To Be

I want to be a Sun bright, shiny, and round I come for the day and leave for the night. I want to be the window you look out every day. I want to be the basketball that you use to win the game I want to be the glasses you wear so you can see your future is clear. I want to be the cup of water to give you a fresh new taste. I want to be the cake that you reward yourself after you win. I want to be your #1 fan when you win or lose. I want to be a spring to spring you on when you are at your lowest.

—By Trevor Daniel, 8th grade
Skeels-Mathews Community Center Summer Camp, Ravenna, OH

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