



Mapping the Future

May 4 Visitors Center 2022 Visioning Report

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Foreword

I offer this brief foreword to share two sentiments: gratitude and optimism.

Gratitude for the interest, engagement and visionary thinking that led to this report. I specifically thank Tina Ughrin, principal of Smile Minded Smartworks, for her patient, engaging and empathetic facilitation of the May 4 Visitor Center (M4VC) visioning process. I also want to give a shout-out to Lori Boes, interim M4VC director. Her depth of knowledge, rich personal network and commitment to May 4 were indispensable to the success of this project. I give thanks as well to University Libraries staff members in our communications and systems departments for their help in promoting our process. Of course, I feel indebted to all those who gave their time and expertise to our visioning process. Nearly a hundred of you completed surveys, participated in workshops and gave interviews to help us learn about the M4VC's potential future.

Optimism because it is clear from this report that opportunities for the M4VC are rich and numerous, and it appears will only be limited by our resources. Not unlike the early 1970s, we live in divided times, economically, politically and racially. Yet now we have the lessons of May 4, 1970 being honored, remembered and explored at Kent State with the M4VC often leading the way. When you examine the section of this report that discusses challenges and tensions, know that these are not new. Since May 4, 1970 the role of university administration, funding, organizational leadership and generational tensions have been recurring and I dare say common elements of the legacy of May 4. But I believe that within most if not all challenges there lies opportunities, and hence my optimism. This report ultimately helps remind us that the legacy of May 4 is bigger than the M4VC. It's bigger than Kent State. Our challenge, which is our opportunity as well, is to continue to explore the lessons of May 4 and use them "...as a lens by which to examine our current world in order to design a better future" (page 5). Despite the challenges that we encounter, we have the correct values, aspirations and vision to continue the empowering work of the May 4 Visitors Center and the legacy of May 4, 1970. I believe our report reaffirms this. Again, thanks to all for helping make this so.

Kenneth J. Burhanna
Dean, University Libraries

Introduction and Overview

After 10 years and thousands of students and public visitors, Kent State University's May 4 Visitors Center underwent a physical refresh in the spring and summer of 2022. With changes in leadership, it was determined to also be a good time to update the Center's mission, vision, and values as well as map its future strategic direction.

Close to 100 KSU May 4 Visitors Center stakeholders participated. The process began with a situational analysis with opportunities for input through interviews, surveys, and focused conversations around strengths, barriers, opportunities, and aspirations. Mission, vision, and values were revisited in an online workshop. Initial findings were presented to the community in June 2022. The following report includes the findings of the process.

Key Findings: Mission Vision Values

On June 8, 2022, members of the larger KSU May 4 community joined a 2-hour long Zoom workshop. Additional input was opened to those who were unable to attend through an online survey. The process led to reaffirming the current mission as well as highlighting some key language around vision and values to be revisited once a new Director is in place.

Current Mission Statement

The May 4 Visitors Center provides a central place where people can explore and better understand the events that took place at Kent State University on May 4, 1970, the context and impact of those events, and their meaning for today.

Vision Discussion Themes

Participants in the discussion and respondents to the online survey want to see the May 4 Visitors Center aspire to:

- Inspire change
- Connect with today's challenges and issues
- Increase education and scholarship
- Serve as a place of contemplation and remembrance
- Be nationally respected as a resource
- Reach broader audiences

Key Findings: Strengths

Below are a few key findings:

- **Physical Space** – proximity to landmark, accessibility, location in Taylor Hall
- **Exhibits** – main galleries, Reflections gallery, Interactive
- **Staff and Leadership** – overall, specific leaders, KSU commitment
- **Approach** – honors voices, provides context, education of new generations
- **Relationships and Partners** – cross- campus, May 4 community, K-12 educators, welcoming

Highlighted Successes to Date

Since the May 4 Visitors Center opened on October 20, 2012, they have welcomed more than:

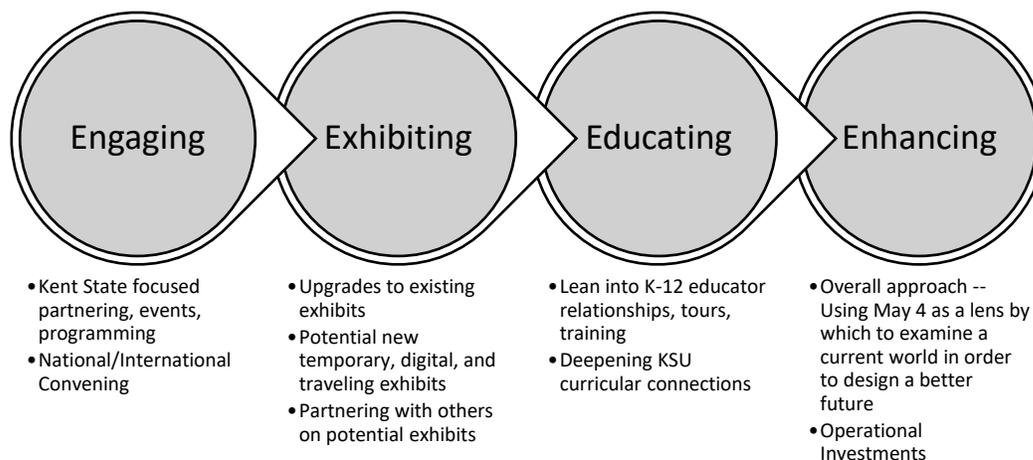
- 70,800 outside visitors
- 1,025 FYE Classes
- 29,750 Kent State students
- 162 upper-division Kent State classes
- 76 visits from outside universities and colleges
- 109 high school/middle school students.

The May 4 Visitors Center has also:

- Opened six original temporary exhibitions
- Worked with more than 60 partners for programming related to May 4, 1970
- Been recognized by the Ohio History Center, the American Association of State and Local History, the National Park Service for securing National Historic Landmark Status
- Won a Cine Golden Eagle for the film in gallery 2.

Emerging Priorities

From the situational analysis process four priority areas emerged. Several opportunities are noted for each priority.



Key Findings: Opportunities ***(Requires Investment)** refers to leadership, staffing, and physical space investment

Engaging

- Deepen and enhance a more seamless coordination with Special Collections and Archives
- Work with internal and external partners on annual national/international convening **(Requires Investment)**
- Explore role of Visitors Center as root connector for information around May 4 and look at intentional connections of the VC to architect's office, commemoration planning, as a host for meetings, etc. **(Requires Investment)**

Exhibiting

- Explore and continue additional collaborations with partners (e.g., Ohio History Center, memorials and historical education around other university protest movements, Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, etc.)
- Update gallery three to connect the legacies of May 4 to challenges society is facing today anchored in issues around state use of power and violence, first amendment, and student activism **(Requires Investment)**
- Develop digital and traveling exhibit and exhibit upgrades **(Requires Investment)**

Educating

- Continue to grow K-12 educator relationships, tours, and programming

- Explore additional ways to embed May 4 into the curriculum such as providing May 4 materials from Visitors Center and Special Collections for College Writing 2 and/or other Core courses as affordable alternative to textbooks, etc. **(Requires Investment)**
- Explore Activism Credential Pathway – extra curricular training preparing students for work in activism and the May 4 VC **(Requires Investment)**

Enhancing

- Connect with other similar public history sites to explore best practices and navigate challenges
- Further develop relationships with potential donors and coordinate with KSU Development Office
- Develop and implement technology plan for creating, updating, and maintaining exhibits **(Requires Investment)**
- Expand staff to include roles such as FT education and engagement position, FT graphic designer, exhibit curator, etc. **(Requires Investment)**

Key Findings: Challenges and Tensions

A number of challenges and tensions emerged where consensus is not clear within the May 4 community. Below are some of those challenges and tensions.

1. Many of the limitations emerging from stakeholder input were grounded in resource constraints impacting the breadth of the audience reachable and the updating and depth of the work.
 - Limited hours, marketing, and space were all connected to resource and personnel constraints.
 - While KSU Administration provided clear interest and intention in supporting the work of the May 4 Visitors Center, some stakeholders worried about long-term lack of investment and follow-through linked to past administrations around the work of May 4 education and commemoration and not yet trusting of the current administration
2. The role of the May 4 Visitors in the overall May 4 landscape is unclear.
 - It is a difficult and ever-changing collaborative environment.
 - There is a lack of clarity and consensus on the role of the VC in the oversight and maintenance of the May 4th Site, in hosting commemoration meetings, in national/international convening, etc.
3. There is a clear generational difference in stakeholders' perceptions, needs, and how they connect with the May 4 Visitors Center.
 - Current students' interests, awareness, and mechanisms for engagement are different than those who experienced May 4, 1970
 - Marketing that speaks to younger audiences is often digital while older stakeholders would like to see more brochures, signage, and other physical marketing materials
 - Younger stakeholders have expressed an interest in contemporary permanent and temporary exhibits

- As those who experienced May 4, 1970, age, there is a potential loss of collective memory, partnerships, and resources
 - The voice of younger professionals not seen same way as those with direct experience with May 4, 1970
 - Opportunity for past generations to transition from actor to advisor
4. A number of ideas emerged in the data collection process for the situational analysis that were larger than the Visitors Center:
- Integrating Voice of May 4th in Kent State University
 - Develop an institutional honor code that is grounded in the lessons learned from May 4, 1970, similar to Miami University's "Love, Honor" code (e.g., Understand, Remember, Respect)
 - Include something about May 4th in the University Mission, Vision, and Values statements
 - University-wide succession plan for keeping May 4 work sustainable
 - Sharing lessons learned Nationally and Internationally
 - Cultivate further how it is known in the world for the shootings on May 4, 1970, becoming the first place others (e.g., institutions, news services, activities, etc.) contact for information, insight, and assistance with dealing with issues that are inherent to the May 4 legacy.
 - Become a national convener and thought leader – hosting National/International speakers and panels
 - Intentional Education
 - Summer workshops with stipends for own faculty to expand teaching of May 4
 - Certificate program for May 4 teaching
 - Development of manual for May 4 teaching with sections for various courses
 - Explore providing education training on May 4 related issues nationally and internationally
 - Commemoration Related
 - Troubleshoot limitations for student involvement with commemoration falling on week of or week before exams
 - Faculty volunteers for commemoration – revisit faculty observers and other ways for faculty to get more involved in Commemoration and beyond
 - Balance investment in commemoration with activist foundation and more student voice (e.g., let students on Task Force be in complete control of one fully funded speaker)

Director of May 4 Visitors Center Findings

As part of the situational analysis, stakeholders often noted what they would like to see in a new Director for the Visitors Center. **Note, no one person could embody all the ideas shared by stakeholders.**

General

- Recognition of unrealistic super-person hopes
- Consider providing a structured mentorship for the new Director

Desired Characteristics

Ideally has:

- Education focus
- Professional background working with an historic site, museum, or library
- Tech savvy
- Values and is innovative in outreach
- Heart for the work, passion, but also high emotional intelligence
- Ability to partner and collaborate
- Balance needs of the survivors with other stakeholders
- Understands civil discourse and student activism
- Is welcoming and inclusive
- Broad knowledge of this point in history but remains neutral
- Background in conflict resolution and restorative justice
- Skilled at navigating complex institution
- Capable of working across differences and tension
- High emotional intelligence and resilience

Does not need to have:

- Archival background but does have ability to work closely with Archives
- PhD
- Personal experience with May 4, 1970

Roles and Responsibilities

- Education
- Outreach – not PR, but work with Marketing on PR
- Development of digital presence
- Curation of exhibits and programming
- Potential fundraising role
- Collaboration with other May 4 activities