
Subject: Forward Focused, Future Ready

Date: Wednesday, September 7, 2022 at 3:56:42 PM Central Daylight Time

From: Ken Hush

EMPORIA STATE
UNIVERSITY

Office of the President

September 7, 2022

Dear Students, Faculty + Staff,

Today Emporia State University is taking the next step to become a *Forward Focused, Future Ready* institution with singular focus — students, students, students.

In June, the Kansas Board of Regents voted to extend the Workforce Management Framework through Dec. 31, 2022, to allow universities the opportunity to submit a framework to implement the policy on campuses. Today I met with Shared Governance — Associated Student Government, Faculty Senate and Staff Senate — and informed them that the ESU Framework for Workforce Management has been submitted to the Kansas Board of Regents to consider and vote on next week.

This framework, if approved, would allow ESU the flexibility to align resources to address the university's structural deficit that has been ongoing for several years, further accelerated by COVID.

This step comes after eight months of extensive work. Since January, we have been gathering information and ideas from students, faculty and staff. We have taken a step back and reevaluated everything from one end of campus to the other, from the programs we offer to the experiences we provide. As a result, ESU is moving forward with a program optimization strategy focused on meeting the rapidly changing needs of today's students.

We have listened to our students. Which is why, in recent months, you have read or heard about the launch of student-success-based diversity, equity and inclusion programs like BRIDGE; increased basic needs services; elevated student events; the new ESU competitive disc golf team; and the planned launch of ESU competitive esports in Spring 2023. ESU has also expanded in-state tuition for on-campus undergraduate students to every state in the lower 48.

While these are good and important initiatives, they do not address the root cause of the

pressures facing higher education today. As we think about long-term success — the next hundred years, Emporia State must make **real change**.

What are we doing + Why Now?

What students need, and expect, from higher education has changed. The landscape of higher education has changed. Students have more options than ever for a path forward after high school given the current workforce shortage. Enrollment in four-year institutions has been in consistent decline for more than five years both nationally and at Emporia State University.

A recent study by Pew Research states that 61% of Americans say higher education is heading in the wrong direction. Specifically, respondents point to high cost of attendance and students not having the skills they need to succeed in the workplace upon graduation.

As the Adaptive University, it's our responsibility to respond to student input and industry signals. Which is why we have taken intentional steps to identify what needs to be done to put our student body, our future students and ESU on the path to lasting success.

This changing landscape is what prompted the Kansas Board of Regents to hire RPK, a higher education consulting company charged with conducting a system-wide review of academic programs at Regents institutions. At ESU, we took it a step further and have spent over 1,000 hours in an extensive and thorough analysis process. Led by academic and administrative leaders on campus, the group studied a wide variety of data including program + enrollment trends, employer need, state and national job growth projections, student interest, program profit + loss information, department sustainability + efficiencies and cultural and community contribution. Results of this analysis are aligned with preliminary findings by RPK.

Going forward, ESU will align our resources with programs that sit squarely in our strike zone. For example, we excel in programs like nursing, biology, technology, business, psychology and teacher education. In fact, we are further refocusing and reenergizing some of our teacher preparation programs. No one does teacher education better than Emporia State University! We are also going to reimagine existing programs to best serve students today and tomorrow.

To enable these strategic adjustments, ESU must decide where to align resources and future dollars to position ESU growth, which is why the framework has been submitted to KBOR.

We must have the courage to make hard choices and the fortitude to press onward so we can do the highest good for the most people. Our proposed Framework for Workforce Management is a difficult choice made for the highest good.

You can expect to receive additional communication next week. We understand that change may be uncomfortable. As stewards of ESU, however, we have a responsibility to our students to do the right, and best, thing for them and their future. It is why we are here.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kuer", with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Ken Hush
President

EMPORIA STATE
UNIVERSITY

1 Kellogg Circle
Emporia, KS 66801-5415
620.341.5551

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