

Presentation to Kansas Board of Regents, Wednesday September 14, 2022

Ken Hush, President

Brent Thomas, Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

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- Good afternoon, everyone - Chair Rolph, esteemed Regents. It is a pleasure to be here today and we thank you for the opportunity to present.
- Here standing with me is, Dr. Brent Thomas, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
- We have brought forth for your consideration and approval, the Emporia State University Workforce Management Framework, a necessary tool to help strategically transform our university for a vibrant and sustainable future.
- We thank you for this opportunity to present to you today.

EMPORIA STATE UNIVERSITY HAS A VISION FOR OUR FUTURE

- We have a singular focus: students, students, students.
- With that in mind – we must be forward focused and future ready.
- What we are here to discuss today is a sensitive subject and this need to change isn't something that has just come about recently as reflected in KBORs initiative back in 2021.

- **COMMUNICATION** –Like many today do not pay attention to the news. That seems to be the case here as there have been written communication as it pertains to the need for change at ESU.
- Since our university leadership is on the front line, sees things from the big picture perspective and are stewards of the university. We have prepared to present our viewpoints today
- It started with a message to all faculty and staff on January 24. Eight months ago, we set forth our intentions to:
 - o Assess every inch of how we operate today.
 - o To consider how we can evolve our programs and curriculum in response to regional economic needs.
 - o We promised to make changes that will optimize our efficiencies and position ESU to move into the future.
 - o We promised to deprioritize things that do not move ESU forward.
 - o We asked faculty and staff:

- What they would change to create a better experience for students, colleagues, alumni, community or state.
 - We asked how we could evolve our programs and curriculum in response to regional economic needs.
- LEADERSHIP – Next, we formed one campus-wide leadership team that increased academic representation – including adding all deans – a group who had not been at the table before.
- We shared this new approach and listed everyone who was part of this newly formed team in a communication to campus on February 9th.
- Since that time, we have expanded the team to include more academic representation including a faculty senate officer last spring and a few weeks ago we added both Associated Student Government and Staff Senate.
- STATE PRESENTATIONS - A few days later, on February 10, we presented to the House Higher Education Budget Committee where we said that we would continue to educate and graduate students and provide top talent for the Kansas economic pipeline.
- While we continued with our core activity of educating students, we also put forth that “to improve is to change.” And we outlined our specific path forward:
- We said we were going to reimagine ESU with a future-focused point of view
 - We said we were going to step back and conduct an institution-wide self-assessment
 - We said we were going to optimize our existing educational platform
 - The strategic actions outlined were:
 - Focus on highest priority initiatives including enrollment and space optimization
 - Plans to retain + recruit top talent
 - To commence an immediate and ongoing review of our academic program mix – An initiative that would take an incremental investment of time by key university leaders.
- We continued to reiterate all these messages and intentions throughout this calendar year via **six** campus-wide communications and four in-person forums – each of which invited ideas and feedback from the campus community.
- Some faculty responded immediately with suggestions about how ESU could chart a path forward.
 - In fact, additional faculty members were added to the leadership team because of feedback submitted.

- We thank those who brought forth creative and thoughtful ideas

WHY ARE WE DOING THIS AND WHY NOW

- We all know that what students want from higher education has changed.
- We all know that the landscape of higher education has changed.
- Our strategic plan, called the Adaptive University. We have not adapted quick enough to meet students' needs
- Of course, we have applied traditional – basic measures, such as hiring freezes, spending restriction, and voluntary retirement opportunities to address financial challenges.
- For a decade and a half ESU has applied the cut-cut-cut philosophy across all of campus. Death by a thousand cuts.
- That doesn't work for us anymore – either programmatically or financially.
- **We have seen continued increases to expenses, alongside declining enrollment.** So what's the choice?
 - Charge students more? We don't want to do that.
 - Continue to cut costs? An approach we know doesn't work.
 - Continually passing the burden to the students is a failure of previous strategies and is not acceptable.
- We decided to solve our deficit by problem-solving with renewed vision and innovation. We looked at what we had and commenced a process from building from the ground up.

THE PROCESS

- The cut-cut-cut approach did not work.
- It is time to take a new approach.
- We established a clear process framework that was wholly dependent upon academic program review and what is needed today.
 - This bears repeating – we conducted an academic program review process. Again, starting from the ground up. It was NOT a personnel, or an individual person review process.
- We have been scrubbing the data and have conducted over a thousand hours in comprehensive analysis of our academic programs.
- From that review process we now have strategic concepts for the programs that we are going to invest in for the future and have identified the programs we must also move away from.
- Likewise, the faculty and staff with the matching skillsets followed with the needed programs. What's left over did not.

- Throughout analysis we have had ongoing shared governance meetings with the respective leaders.
 - Example - I specifically shared the possibility of this framework to the previous faculty senate president last spring - What they did with that information is unknown. I had a similar discussion again the following month in the presence of another faculty senate officer.
 - Additionally, deans shared the news of KBORs extension of the use of this policy with their department chairs in June.
- The policy you approved last June will enable ESU to align resources and invest into growth areas by doubling down in those programs that sit in our strike zone. Our core competencies – programs like nursing, biology, technology, business, library and information management, psychology and teacher education – just to name a few.
- We will continue to make re-energizing investments in these strike zone programs in order to best meet the needs of current and future students.
- Listening to our students, we've already invested in many student success initiatives that were made possible thanks to renewed partnerships with our city and county, local businesses, the Jones Foundation, our foundation, etc.
- That was just the beginning.

We are transforming Emporia State University.

FRAMEWORK

- The framework is a necessary tool to make our vision a reality.
- Make no mistake the use of this framework is NOT just another budget cutting exercise. Been there done that – numerous times. It will enable us to fundamentally change what we can offer our students. And that's exactly what we're going to do.
- We submitted the framework to our shared governance partners last week. We received and considered the feedback they provided to us.
- You have been advised of their feedback.
- We have listened, evaluated and have implemented changes based on that feedback.
- We want to make you aware of what ESU will be doing for our students and our university employees.
- STUDENTS:
 - One: Yes. EVERY student will have the opportunity to complete their current degree program at Emporia State University. In terms of degree completion there is **zero** impact to students.
 - Two: Yes, the quality of programming will continue through completion.

- Three: Yes. Students will continue to receive their current scholarships and financial aid
- Four: Yes. For the approximate 100, or 2%, of students who are in programs that are affected professional advisors will help them as they complete their degree program as planned.
- Five: Yes. Students will have access to mental health services should they need them.
- UNIVERSITY EMPLOYEES:
 - One: The vast majority of impacted employees will have the opportunity to remain through the end of the academic year in May 2023. In addition, they will have the opportunity to receive an additional three months severance pay. This equates to almost one-year notice and compensation.
 - Two: The vast majority will have the opportunity to continue at ESU through teach out periods.
 - Three: Employees will receive outplacement services. Also ESU has been networking with other universities for potential placement.
 - And, Four: like students, our employees will have access to mental health counseling.

At this time, I would like to invite Brent Thomas – Dean of Liberal Arts and Sciences and interim provost and vice president of Academic Affairs to say a few words. Dr. Thomas:

Brent Thomas – Why Section

- We have repeatedly absorbed budget cut after budget cut during my 16 years at ESU.
- And we have repeatedly used the same standard mechanisms for addressing our past budget shortfalls.
- We have relied heavily upon reductions to operating budgets, eliminating annual equipment funds, eliminating positions that happened to be vacant, or eliminated positions filled by staff or non-tenure track faculty.
- These decisions have not been strategic and, no matter the magnitude of these past budget cuts, our past decisions seem to have only led to a pattern of one cut after another for years.
- I believe that Albert Einstein had a word to describe situations where one does the same thing over and over expecting different results.
- We MUST begin to operate differently than we have in the past.
- This is about fundamentally changing how we approach our academic offerings. We cannot continue to expect our faculty and staff to do more with less. We want, and expect more, than that. We must proactively make tough decisions that will permit us to strategically invest in our academic programs.

- This framework will allow us the latitude and expediency we need to make changes that will set us up for long-term success.

THE PROCESS

- Throughout the program review process a smaller portion of the leadership team – a group with an academic majority - our provost and deans have been included along with student success, diversity, equity and inclusion, infrastructure, marketing + communication. Once the program review was complete, we added personnel related team members including human resources and finance.
 - This team also represents
 - Over 200 years of ESU employment
 - More than half are ESU alumni
 - And more than a dozen of their own children and family members either go to, or have gone to, ESU.
 - This is a group with a vested interest.
 - Most of the data we have used as part of our analysis is public to everyone. Data like enrollment trends at ESU and across the nation, program enrollment, student interest data, job growth projections, and articles and research about the state of higher education. We have also reviewed more confidential data such as profit and loss statements by program.
 - We also considered Diversity Equity and Inclusion throughout. From our Sr. Director of DEI:
 - “This framework has allowed us to look at our structures in a more equitable way. It is important to acknowledging that our current system creates barriers and prevents access in a truly equitable way. This framework helps adjust some of those inequalities.”
 - “Throughout this process, we have continued to focus on how it will affect our current and future students. We have put programs in place to help support current students through change and transition and will continue to do so. While change can be difficult, it is important to understand what ESU provides to future students when it comes to access, affordability, and support. It is imperative ESU continues to exist for another 159 years to serve first-generation, low-income and other marginalized students.”
 - Our leadership group used a team concept to evaluate our academic offerings across the entire university. This approach is very different than the siloed processes that we have used in the past and has truly been a game-changer.
 - We have received a lot of questions about faculty involvement in the process and if ESU values tenure.

- Over the years, I have challenged faculty – as have my fellow deans – to consider the future and to take the necessary steps to adapt their programs to meet the evolving needs of future students.
 - In fact, many of the concepts for the future that I was able to bring forth to my fellow leaders were the result of conversations with department chairs and faculty.
 - In the past, we have not had the resources, processes or policies in place that enabled us to make these changes in an effective or timely manner.
 - As a previous faculty member, I understand the desire to be part of the conversation. However, what we are talking about is total transformation. It would be unwise, harmful, and frankly unethical to ask faculty to make decisions about people and programs across the entire university. We did not believe that we should put our faculty into a situation where they were forced to point at one another as targets for restructuring.
 - In terms of tenure, yes ESU values the important role that tenure plays in higher education. As I've stated before, you cannot build a successful, long-term program on the backs of adjuncts.
 - That said, throughout this process, we also have an obligation to protect not only those with the privilege of tenure, but also probationary faculty on the tenure track, parttime faculty, full-time non-tenure track instructors, and staff. We recognize that we must be committed to total inclusion.
- On behalf of my fellow colleagues who have worked together on these analyses, I state that we unequivocally support this initiative.
 - We believe it's time to move forward in an intentional and strategic manner.
 - Failure to act will result in further detriment to our university – I am pushing to act as quickly as possible.
 - Our president now has the burden of carrying forth our plans for implementation as ESU charts a new path to the future.
 - THANK YOU for your time and consideration on these difficult but critically important matters.

BACK TO KEN:

IN CLOSING

- We appreciate KBORs leadership and service as a valued sounding board.

- Thank you to our three-person regent committee who challenged and encouraged us throughout our change analysis process.
- ESU fully recognizes KBOR role is to govern the Kansas Regents System. Thank you for that.
- I would also like to thank everyone who has been responding to us since January 24 – students, faculty and staff who have come forward with ideas, creativity and excitement. Thank you all for your contributions and support along the way – we have heard you.
- Today we ask that you review and vote in favor of passing the ESU Workforce Management Framework that will allow ESU to best position ourselves for a vibrant and sustainable future.
- We fully realize it is not possible to please everyone on this subject.
- Our teammate summarizes our action request and intentions well: ESU will continue to do the highest good for the most people.