

FOREVER  BRIGHTER™  
KENT STATE UNIVERSITY®



*Building a Brighter Future  
Through Philanthropy and  
Alumni Engagement*

**A Strategic Plan for the Division of Philanthropy  
and Alumni Engagement**

# INTRODUCTION

The Division of Philanthropy and Alumni Engagement (DPAE) has opened a new chapter at Kent State University. Over the past year, we have reframed our mission and committed to an exciting vision for donor and alumni engagement.

Our strategic plan, *Building a Brighter Future Through Philanthropy and Alumni Engagement*, was developed through collaboration and input from members of our division, the Kent State University Foundation Board, the Kent State Alumni Association Board, university administrators, faculty and staff.

This plan, which serves as our roadmap for 2022-2025, restates our mission, defines our vision for philanthropy and alumni engagement, and establishes indicators to measure success as we move forward with implementation. Never before have we had a comprehensive roadmap that imagined our collective future, and we are proud to introduce that future to you!

Student Success is the number one priority at Kent State University, and our team is committed to inspiring our donors and alumni to support this goal. As we embark on the public phase of *Forever Brighter*, our comprehensive campaign to raise \$350 million, we remain steadfast in garnering philanthropic support for scholarships and programs that support student success; university initiatives like Brain Health research, Athletics and Design Innovation; endowed faculty and staff positions; and vital capital projects like Crawford Hall, the College of Aeronautics and Engineering building expansion and other high-priority capital initiatives.

Inspiring philanthropy takes all of us - our philanthropic advisors, deans and faculty, university leadership, our students and, of course, our alumni and friends. This plan outlines key strategies to involve our entire university community in raising the bar and reaching new levels of fundraising and alumni engagement at Kent State.

We hope you will read this plan and be inspired to become part of our renewed vision for philanthropy and alumni engagement. Because at Kent State, what sets us apart is how we come together!

Together, we will make the world *Forever Brighter*.

## Valoree Vargo

Vice President, DPAE  
CEO, KSU Foundation

**Peter Holway, '82**  
Chairman  
KSU Foundation

**Barbara Smith, '84**  
President  
KSU Alumni Association





## MISSION

Engage and inspire alumni, friends and partners to connect with Kent State University - and its students - by giving of their time, talent and treasure.

## VISION

Foster a robust and dynamic network of engaged partners who grow the culture of philanthropy at Kent State, transforming lives and making the world *Forever Brighter*.

## OUR VALUES

- Respect, Kindness and Purpose
- Community
- Transforming Lives
- Freedom of Expression and Idea Exchange
- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging
- Continuous Improvement

## THREE KEY THEMES

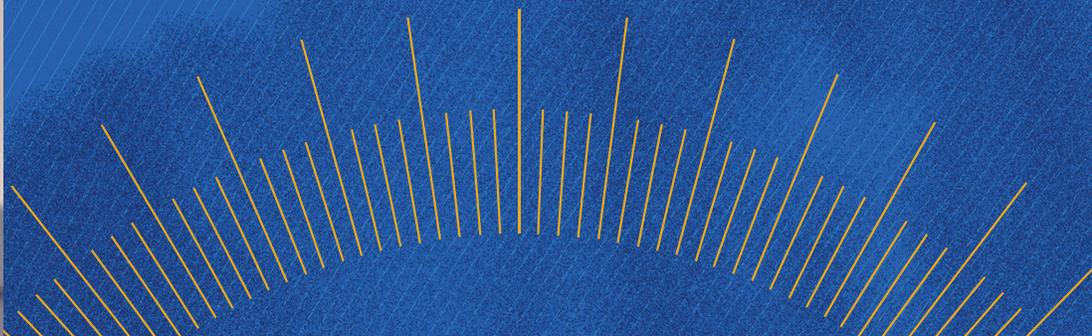
- Intentional Alignment
- Innovative Initiatives
- Impactful Opportunities

## KEY AUDIENCES

- Alumni
- Board Volunteers
- Donors/Prospects (Corporations, Foundations, Individuals)
- DPAE Staff
- KSU Faculty and Staff
- KSU Internal Partners
- Students

## TIMING

- Calendar Years 2022-2025



# INTENTIONAL ALIGNMENT

## **Promote the culture of philanthropy as a priority for the entire university community.**

- Lead ongoing philanthropic engagement and education sessions for university partners in alignment with *Forever Brighter* priorities.
- Identify and develop faculty and staff to serve as key spokespeople for philanthropic priorities.
- Implement onboarding session for new deans and vice presidents to ensure understanding of their partnership with DPAE. Include a variation for new President's Advisory Council-level employees.
- Continue university shift from transactional to transformational philanthropy – with focus on donor-centered fundraising and stewardship.
- Cultivate new methods of student education regarding the role and value of philanthropy.

## **Align all volunteer board structures and responsibilities to further support and enhance the mission of philanthropy and alumni engagement.**

- Support boards in development and execution of governance and industry best practice initiatives.
- Expand engagement for volunteers by continuing to offer meaningful opportunities.
- Ensure board composition is reflective of a diverse university community and alumni base.
- Align board recruitment to support the division's operational goals as outlined annually as part of the strategic plan.
- Recruit and support major gift donors/key volunteers who are interested in serving as champions for their respective area of passion to educate and encourage others to participate through philanthropy.

## **Create a staffing structure that supports our mission and employs best practices for philanthropy and alumni relations.**

- Develop a DPAE team that reflects the diversity of the university community and alumni base.
- Enhance team of subject matter experts across our division who align each college, campus and division in their alumni and donor endeavors to support DPAE's vision and plan.
- Cultivate a nimble team that will pair donor passions with philanthropic university priorities in order to raise more financial support.
- Socialize our Strategic Plan 2022-2025 with university leadership, partners, alumni and volunteers.

# INNOVATIVE INITIATIVES

## **Augment tools and technology to support data-informed decision making and enhance the experiences of key audiences.**

- Streamline alumni and donor data collection and create an easier user interface to consume the information and support data-informed decision making.
- Continue to evolve our gift processing and acknowledgment practices and timelines to better serve our donors.
- Revise our alumni engagement and participation scoring system to match industry-wide measurements.
- Utilize industry best practices using digital technology to enhance our donor, volunteer and alumni experiences.

## **Develop more robust cross-unit partnerships within the university system including campuses, academics, service and administrative units.**

- Develop deeper relationships with other divisions and/or academic units in order to better connect alumni and donors with students.
- Identify university partners for relevant collaborations on technology.
- Champion interdisciplinary collaboration to develop "fundable big ideas."

**Explore and measure new fundraising initiatives and revenue streams that can lead to further increases in the Foundation's endowment and assets.**

- Explore and test an endowment acceleration program.
- Develop and implement programs for alumni and friends with proceeds to support endowed scholarship programs that align with campaign initiatives.
- Continue to market KSU Hotel and Conference Center for prioritized use within the university community.
- Continue to operate an industry-leading Giving Tuesday campaign and/or Giving Day.
- Participate in the development of a university-wide corporate engagement strategy.
- Analyze the reconstitution of a Leadership Annual Giving program.
- Connect prospects to alternative forms of giving in support of Kent State.

## IMPACTFUL OPPORTUNITIES

**Continue to develop our principal gift program (\$1 million+) into a dynamic and robust program that focuses on customized donor profiles and strategies.**

- Enhance and develop customized fundraising and stewardship plans for our principal gift donor population.
- Implement annual Presidential Top Prospects and Engagement Plan with the Office of the President.

**Serve as a dependable resource for meaningful alumni engagement across their lifetime.**

- Provide meaningful opportunities that inspire alumni to support the next generation of Golden Flashes through their philanthropy.
- Increase alumni engagement through a variety of virtual and in-person opportunities.
- Grow KSU relationship with our young alumni to provide them meaningful connections that resonate with their interests, beginning with commencement.

- Create a university-wide mentoring program for alumni to mentor students, as well as explore interest in a peer-to-peer alumni mentoring network.
- Connect alumni to career development resources to support them in their career growth.

**Develop an organized volunteer network of alumni worldwide that supports the next generation of Flashes and feels connected to KSU throughout their lifetime.**

- Grow comprehensive volunteer opportunities – in partnership with university units – for alumni to connect with students.
- Ensure volunteer opportunities create a pipeline to support chapter and board volunteer membership.
- Reimagine and enhance Alumni Chapter system, in partnership with the Kent State Alumni Association Board of Directors.

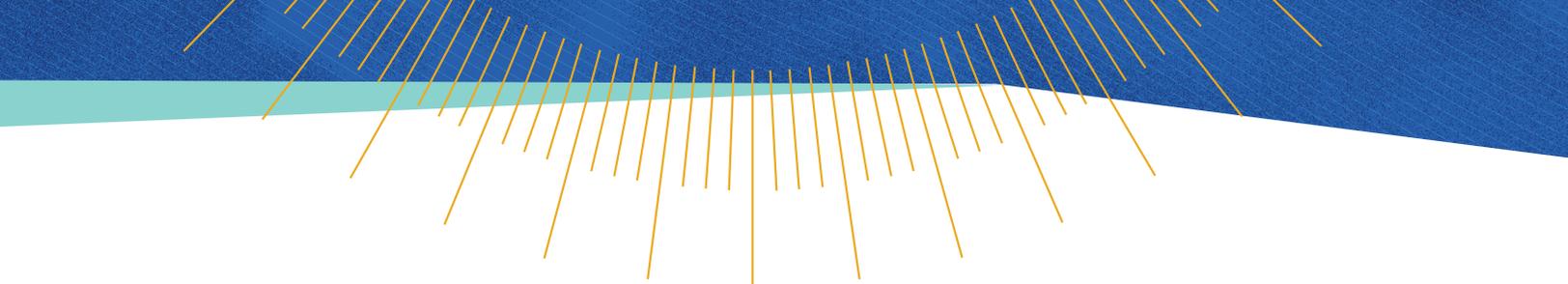
**Create a culture that promotes staff satisfaction to support organizational continuity.**

- Continue to solidify the role of the divisional Leadership Team and how they best represent the voices of the entire staff.
- Provide clear expectations, support, accountability and recognition to all employees.
- Foster a divisional team supported with transparency, inclusion and belonging and that displays those values through interactions with our partners.

**Accomplish the stated *Forever Brighter* campaign goal of \$350 million, including \$100 million for Prioritizing Student Success.**

## NEXT STEPS

**Finalize annual divisional and board tactics and key measurables to support the goals of this plan.**



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is how we come together.**

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**Division of Philanthropy  
and Alumni Engagement**

[www.kent.edu/foreverbrighter](http://www.kent.edu/foreverbrighter)