Myron S. Henry

***Almost metropolitan universities** are historically residential campuses and possess most of the features and values of the traditional university. They are also located near major population centers and increasingly serve diverse constituencies. In this article, measures of institutional success; an expanded view of scholarship; instructional activities; undue program complexity; teamwork, unit productivity, and group rewards; the university citizen; and regional partnerships among institutions, are developed and discussed from the perspective of almost metropolitan universities, with Kent State University as the prototype.*

Almost Metropolitan Universities:

Challenges and Opportunities for Historically Residential Campuses Located in Major Metropolitan Areas

Introduction

The Kent State University System consists of seven two-year, associate degree granting regional campuses, and the large, historically residential, doctoral granting Kent Campus. Currently the university enrolls nearly 33,000 students, including about 23,000 at its Kent Campus. Graduate students total approximately 5,000, including those who are served at off-campus locations. Under rather standard definitions, Kent State University might not be characterized as a metropolitan university. After all, its Kent Campus is located in a community with a population of approximately 25,000, and it is a major residential institution with thirty resident halls.

On the other hand, the Kent Campus is just twelve miles from downtown Akron, the center of a metropolitan area of about one-half million people, and approximately thirty-five miles from lake front Cleveland, the center of a metropolitan area of over 1,500,000 people. More than 25,000 alumni of Kent State University live in the greater Akron-Cleveland area. And through its Ashtabula, East Liverpool, Geauga, Salem, Stark, Trumbull and Tuscarawas Regional Campuses, the Kent State University presence is notable in smaller population areas of Northeast Ohio.

Is Kent a metropolitan university? With its eight Northeast Ohio locations and a Kent Campus within commuting distance of two major metropolitan centers, this past provost of a metropolitan university certainly thinks Kent State University has many of the attributes associated with

major metropolitan universities. So while Kent State University may be thought of by most as an historically residential university, close examination of its purposes and activities suggests that it may be among a special group of hybrid institutions, the *almost metropolitan* universities.

What are some of the characteristics of *almost metropolitan universities*? They are residential in nature and still possess many of the features and values of the traditional university. They are located near major population centers and recognize the need to serve effectively the *new student*: an older, working student in need of services and classes at convenient times; a single-parent student who may need day-care services; and a student who is less well prepared than might be desirable, but who can achieve with appropriate encouragement and developmental help. Almost metropolitan universities see themselves as integral parts of and partners to their communities. They recognize they cannot be all things, and thus seek workable partnerships with colleague institutions. They also may be struggling with their evolving images as they try to be more responsive to the needs of increasingly complex and diverse constituencies.

Leadership at almost metropolitan universities means addressing issues that are shaped by the changing nature of these institutions. Like other almost metropolitan universities, Kent State University is wrestling with how best to meet many complex challenges while building upon the considerable strengths emanating from its rich history. As first officers to presidents, provosts at almost metropolitan universities like Kent must be in the middle of the action to deal with major issues facing their institutions. Thus leadership in the context of the topics below is described from a provost's point of view. While many of the ideas and words are borrowed from the 1994 *Kent State University Strategic Plan* (KSUSP), the nuances and conclusions are my sole responsibility.

Some Challenges and Opportunities for Almost Metropolitan Universities

This section focuses on seven interrelated themes: *measures of institutional success*; *an expanded view of scholarship*; *instructional activities*; *undue program complexity*; *teamwork, unit productivity, and group rewards*; *the university citizen*; and *regional partnerships among institutions.* Each of these topics received significant attention during the recently completed Kent State University strategic planning process. To set a stage for examining these issues in more detail, it is appropriate to review briefly what in and of itself was a major challenge and opportunity, the development of part one (Academic and Student Affairs) of KSUSP.

Preparation for the strategic planning process actually began in the summer of 1992, when the standing University Priorities and Budget Advisory Committee (UPBAC), a twenty-five person, broadly representative committee appointed by the president and chaired by the provost, began perusing defining documents of the university as a prerequisite to developing a revised mission statement for the university. Building upon existing materials and projecting into the future, UPBAC first drafted a comprehensive statement intended to characterize major features of the university. After review at virtually all levels of the university, a revised version of what is now entitled the *Kent Institutional Characteristics* (KICS) statement was endorsed by the Faculty Senate, the president, and, in the spring of 1993, the Board of Trustees. UPBAC subsequently submitted a revised mission statement to the university community for review. The mission statement, which emanated from the

KICS statement, was adopted by the Board of Trustees in June of 1993.

What was the role of the provost in the development of the KICS and mission statements? First, the process was organized, given high visibility, and marshalled along by the provost and members of his staff. Second, the provost was a pro-active chair of UPBAC, as a cheer leader to help its members and particularly the editing subcommittee maintain enthusiasm and energy for the task, as one of several writers and editors involved in drafting the documents, as the main spokesperson for UPBAC in providing status reports to the campus community, and as one of many champions for the documents once they were approved by all of UPBAC. This latter role included promoting constructive dialogue and action on the documents by the Faculty Senate and the Board of Trustees. Third and most importantly, I encouraged leadership by members of UPBAC, so that they would have ownership of the KICS and mission statements and be the real advocates for the documents.

The strategic planning process proved even more challenging, primarily because of ongoing budget constraints and a mandate from the Ohio Board of Regents to all public institutions in Ohio to prepare Functional Mission Statements (strategic plans) over a summer and fall semester. Again, my staff and I assumed the responsibility of preparing structured guidelines and organizing the process. Initially, my role as provost centered on persuading departments, schools, and colleges that a university strategic plan could be completed in the time allotted, and that unit strategic plans, which were to be developed mostly in the summer, would serve as the foundation for the university strategic plan. Also, considerable time was spent promoting a guiding principle: *think of the university as a whole and how your unit does and can connect to others*. What other ways did I provide leadership? With input from many, the members for the Committee for University Strategic Planning (CUSP) were judiciously chosen by the provost. To preserve continuity and chemistry from the process for the KICS and mission statements, the 43-person CUSP was built around an already cohesive UPBAC. Other faculty members were chosen to serve on CUSP because they were demonstrated professionals and opinion leaders who had proven themselves as statespeople. For example, four influential faculty senators became CUSP members. Capsulizing, leadership by provosts often means carefully choosing *the right faculty and staff* to serve in important roles, gently asking more of them, and then facilitating their success. After much campus input, revision, and promoting, part one of KSUSP was approved by the Faculty Senate and the Board of Trustees in late January of 1994. While I did play a lead role in the strategic planning process, I would be remiss not to acknowledge that CUSP ultimately became a committee of leaders.

Was the strategic planning process unique because Kent might be described as an almost metropolitan university? Actually, a strategic planning process is by its very nature *institution specific* and depends upon that university's mission, leadership, previous planning efforts, fiscal health, campus culture, political environment, and esprit de corps, to name but a few important variables. KSUSP now contains numerous goals, objectives, and initiatives that clearly chart paths which emphasize the emerging hybrid, almost metropolitan nature of the institution.

Redefining What Constitutes Institutional Success

The strategic planning process certainly revealed that many at Kent State University still judge its success by measures associated with **traditional universities**. While acknowledging that I may be precariously close to stereotyping, I would

nonetheless describe a traditional university as one that has *grown up* as a principally residential campus and may still think primarily in terms of undergraduate and graduate students living on or near campus. The traditional university probably still provides services tailored mostly to the 18 to 24 year old cohort and primarily from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily; schedules most of its classes between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m.; expects (yearns?) to admit only students well-prepared for college; and speaks with reverence about ACT scores and five-year graduation rates that are characteristic of a relatively homogeneous and affluent student body.

All of Kent's eight campuses are serving growing numbers of older, placebound students. The Kent Campus draws a student body increasingly diverse in ethnicity, race, and academic preparation from large city school systems. It has become a major deliverer of graduate programs and workshops to employed professionals, and much of the faculty's research focuses on social issues and applications of science and technology. Yet for *almost metropolitan* universities like Kent, modified measures for institutional success may be more difficult to define and accept, in part because such universities have emerged from traditional roots, still are major residential institutions, and have faculty whose own professional experiences cause them to guard fervently the values and measures for success associated with traditional campuses. Thus the leadership of almost metropolitan universities must give visibility to the question of how meaningful five-year graduation rates as a measure of institutional success are when students at almost metropolitan universities often work, increasingly commute, may begin at regional campuses or community colleges, and come from less affluent backgrounds. In visits with faculty in departments, schools, and colleges, I have asserted that six or seven-year graduation rates may be more relevant, even taking into account the residential nature of the Kent Campus. Discussions have also centered on other characteristics of the almost metropolitan university, like the increasing number of part-time graduate students who seek additional education only for career advancement, not for another degree. Other almost metropolitan features are the important service and applied research functions performed by entities such as the Northeast Ohio Employee Ownership Center, a university unit which assists employee owned businesses, and the Urban Design Center of Northeast Ohio, a unit dedicated to community planning and heritage preservation, and cooperatively administered by Kent's School of Architecture and Environmental Design and Cleveland State University.

How does senior leadership help persuade understandably reluctant campuses to recast measures for institutional success at *almost metropolitan* universities? Presidents can emphasize the importance of reconfigured measures for institutional success, not only to faculty and staff, but also to alumni and governing board members. Provosts can use the soap box to promote the need for more relevant measures of institutional success, and provide resource incentives to units which are expanding in appropriate ways their roles within the communities being served. And at promotion, tenure, and merit raise times, provosts can encourage proper recognition of faculty who are responding to the challenges of serving diverse types of students, developing special and integrated professional relationships with nearby communities, facilitating technology transfer, and engaging in rigorous research on applied problems which are of significance to their regions. As a university with a traditional history, it is not a small assignment for Kent State University to persuade itself and the public it serves of the importance of reconstituted measures for institutional success. But I believe progress is evident, partly because of understandings emerging from the strategic planning process.

An Expanded View of Scholarship

An encompassing definition of what is appropriate faculty scholarship has become the norm at most metropolitan universities. With leadership from the president and the Faculty Senate, Kent State University has also embraced a broader understanding of faculty scholarship. This more expansive definition of what is accepted as legitimate scholarship is based upon the scholarship of application; the scholarship of integration; the scholarship of teaching; and scholarship of discovery as described in i L. Boyer's monograph, *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate* (The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Science, Princeton, 1990). A Faculty Senate approved set of twenty Principles of Scholarship serve as the foundation for this expanded view of scholarship at Kent, including the three that follow:

- *All four* [Boyer] *aspects of scholarship need to be considered and rewarded at the department level.*
- *The issue of quality of all types of scholarship needs to be addressed by each department.*
- *Promotion and tenure criteria should respond fully to the diverse aspects of faculty roles.*

During the approval process, the twenty principles stimulated healthy discussion, thereby raising awareness of the varied nature of legitimate scholarship, particularly at an institution with a broad and complex mission like Kent State University (and like other almost metropolitan universities). Kent Campus academic departments are currently in the process of interpreting and operationalizing the principles in their own contexts. What are the roles of deans and the provost in this process? Senior leadership from the president to the deans has encouraged the development of the more encompassing definitions of scholarship. For example, the provost and the chair of the Faculty Senate have visited several Kent Campus units to discuss possible interpretations of an expanded view of scholarship.

Because broadened definitions of scholarship cannot be viewed as *mushy*, the validity of all forms of scholarship depend on more extensive and rigorous evaluation. Academic deans and the provost have important roles in fostering the development of additional ways to evaluate expanded types of scholarship, like the peer review of teaching project (highlighted under *Instructional Activities*). Appropriate implementation of the principles at department, school, and college levels will foster a less traditional, but no less important, scholarship which focuses on regional issues. And additional faculty involvement in important, area-specific scholarship is essential if *almost metropolitan* universities are to be more immersed into the regions they serve, and if measures of success for these institutions are to evolve.

Instructional Activities

Characterizing certain instructional activities as scholarship (e.g., the scholarship of teaching) has had many benefits for Kent State University. For example, it has given additional focus not only to the importance of undergraduate teaching, but also to finding new ways to evaluate rigorously instructional activities. Part one of the KSUSP contains the objectives

- *Develop at department/school levels more comprehensive ways of evaluating the scholarship of teaching and incorporate these measures into the evaluation, reward, and recognition of scholarship broadly defined.*
- *Expand the use of department exit exams, exit surveys, LER* (liberal educa-

tion requirements) *surveys, performance on entrance exams for advanced study, placement of graduates, and alumni surveys as assessment tools for teaching effectiveness.*

- *Increase the use of peer evaluations and systematic evaluation of teaching portfolios in the reward system for faculty.*

Because the quality of the undergraduate experience is increasingly being called into question in state after state, the evaluation of teaching will be an ever more center stage issue. Kent State University has become one of a dozen universities selected to be part of a national pilot project, *From Idea to Prototype: A Peer Review of Teaching*. The nearly two-year project is being directed by the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE). Participating units from Kent include the Department of History, the School of Nursing, and the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science. As overall project director, my staff and I have provided organizational leadership, resource support, and relevant information to the participating units and faculty teams. This project and others like it at local levels may help move *teaching from its current private status to community property*, as Lee S. Shulman from Stanford University urged at the AAHE Conference on Faculty Roles and Rewards in January 1993.

Teaching is a particularly challenging business at the undergraduate level at metropolitan and almost metropolitan universities, in part because of the rich diversity in age, race, ethnicity, and cultural backgrounds found at these types of institutions, as well as the number of under-prepared students served by them. Therefore, almost metropolitan universities like Kent will need to *facilitate development opportunities to assist faculty in responding to different learning styles of increasingly diverse student populations* (KSUSP).

As a partial response to this goal and with recognition of the impact new technologies will have on instructional activities, Kent State University has established a Teaching Council. It consists primarily of faculty, will make awards to support teaching development projects, and is funded through the Provost's Office.

A more encompassing approach to evaluating teaching may help foster more effective uses of new technologies in instruction. How do faculty use these new technologies to enhance teaching and learning? How does any university keep up with the dizzying array of new tools for teaching? While I cannot claim to have special insight into the answers to these questions, my office has been a co-sponsor for two major studies at Kent on the use of new technologies for instruction, including one on the roles of academic computing and distance learning at Kent into the next century. As a result of strategic planning and these specialized studies, the university is now poised to make significant investments to enhance electronic linkages among its eight campuses.

Undue Program Complexity

Sometimes lost in the ongoing debate about research and the undergraduate experience is what might be the most prominent roadblock to the timely completion of baccalaureate degrees: undue program complexity. At many institutions, requirements in majors overly intrude into universal general education requirements. Frequently, major requirements are too technical and excessively complex. More often than not, new curricular requirements add to instead of replace existing ones. Undue program complexity is an issue of particular note at metropolitan and almost metropolitan universities, where students stop into and out of academic programs, have often transferred from other institutions, and may have work schedules which

reduce class availability. Complex curricula also make advising more complicated for the part-time student. Most significantly, they increase the time it takes to complete baccalaureate programs, something less affluent students at metropolitan and almost metropolitan universities can ill afford. Reducing undue complexity in undergraduate programs is a major challenge facing almost metropolitan universities, particularly since many of their curricula may have been built from a more traditional perspective.

If I have used the *bully pulpit* approach at all, it has been to raise the awareness of faculty to the importance of revising unduly complex and overly technical curricula. If CUSP members were asked to identify an issue about which I have been *too pushy*, it would likely be undue program complexity. Addressing the issue of unduly complex curricula has become a major goal in KSUSP. Now the challenge is to deliver on that goal.

Teamwork, Unit Productivity, and Group Rewards

At Kent, revised definitions of faculty roles have been motivated by the renewed focus on the undergraduate experience as well as by the more encompassing definitions of scholarship introduced by Boyer. An expanded definition of scholarship leads to a compelling theme: at department levels, there should be a continuum of equally important scholarly activities that are complementary, mutually supportive, and unifying. Therefore, departmental productivity should be judged over a continuum of important tasks embodied within the overall mission of the department. This approach has the effect of highlighting department productivity rather than individual stardom.

Emphasizing departmental productivity leads to a familiar idea worthy of renewed attention. To optimize productivity, departments should recognize the different talents of faculty, and ensure assigned responsibilities are consistent with faculty strengths. This approach would indeed mean some will teach more, some will research more, and some will engage more extensively in service activities. It would also mean that faculty will be rewarded on the basis of the quality of their performance, regardless of their particular blend of teaching, research and service. And this might mean that the extensive mission of the almost metropolitan university would be better discharged. Parenthetically, most metropolitan universities already value more notably the varied roles of faculty.

How can deans and provosts foster an emphasis on department productivity? Certainly by speaking frequently and publicly about the importance of overall unit productivity. Then by allocating resources, such as positions, current expenses, and equipment monies, to units based upon the contributions of those units, using some set of appropriate measures, to the overall success of the college and university. And by tying a portion of merit raise pools for faculty to the overall success of their units.

The University Citizen

During the last two years, the AAHE Forum on Faculty Roles and Rewards has given new energy to the topic of how faculty spend their professional time and how they are (or should be) compensated. Legislatures have taken a keen interest in the amount of time faculty devote to undergraduate instructional activities. National surveys show that faculty believe too much emphasis is placed on research, and that other activities like teaching are not rewarded to the extent that research is. But what percentage of the faculty is actually engaged in what might be called *cutting*

edge research? In my opinion, the issue is not a matter of doing less research. Instead, it is a matter of recognizing and rewarding more notably teaching and service. Admittedly, research has been the capital which has kept faculty marketable. Professional organizations primarily highlight faculty research activities, and research generates most of the sponsored program activity. But with the renewed emphasis on faculty roles and rewards, higher education may really be on the verge of stressing and valuing *overall productivity* of faculty.

At some universities, it is senior faculty now less involved in cutting edge research whose overall contributions to their institutions are invaluable but have been undervalued. Yet I believe that senior faculty must lead in the redefinition of faculty roles and rewards at department levels. If the burden of change is to be shouldered by mainly junior, mostly untenured faculty, then change will be difficult to achieve. Junior faculty simply must engage in research and creative activities as well as learn how best to help students achieve academically. Senior faculty must lead in interpreting the four Boyer scholarships, and ensure that teaching is properly valued and evaluated in their departments. But changes in career directions are normal as faculty grow older. Therefore senior faculty whose careers have evolved from centering on research should be willing to assume additional leadership, teaching, and service responsibilities, and focus on their roles as *university citizens*. Highlighting the indispensable role of the university citizen is particularly relevant to almost metropolitan universities because of their evolving and hybrid natures.

Kent State University is one of thirty institutions across the nation that are participating in The Pew Charitable Trusts sponsored *Pew Higher Education Roundtable* focusing on the academic department as the primary unit for change. A Kent Roundtable of 25 campus opinion leaders developed five important principles to help guide the university into the twenty-first century. One of these principles, which is also prominently featured in KSUSP suggests that the university *cultivate a stake-holder oriented strategy for continuous improvement.*

Two corollaries to this principle are for the university to ensure *shared decision making and shared accountability*, and to foster a *spirit of community*. Fundamental to achieving the goals implicit to this principle and its corollaries is to value the contributions of and seek leadership from faculty who are university citizens.

How do provosts foster university citizenship? For starters, by speaking often to the importance of the university citizen in the life of the institution, by valuing more notably and recognizing publicly senior faculty who have shifted career interests to include greater contributions in teaching and service, and by encouraging deans and department chairs to do so as well.

Regional Partnerships Among Institutions

Kent State University shares the Northeast Ohio area with three other public universities which can be accurately described as metropolitan institutions: the University of Akron, Cleveland State University, and Youngstown State University. There are also several private colleges and universities (including Case Western Reserve University) in the region as well a number public community colleges. Thus opportunities abound for institutional collaboration and resource sharing.

Perhaps the most prominent success story involving institutional collaboration in Northeast Ohio dates back twenty years, when the University of Akron, Kent State University, and Youngstown State University combined talents and influence to help establish the Northeast Ohio College of Medicine (NEOUCOM). The medical college, which is located eight miles east of the Kent Campus, is dedicated to

educating primary care physicians, has collaborative programming with the three partner universities, and is enjoying considerable success. While NEOUCOM is free standing, its nine person governing board includes one member from each of the Boards of Trustees of the three partner universities as well as the three presidents.

There are many other important collaborations among the institutions in Northeast Ohio. To illustrate, Kent is home to the Center on Advanced Liquid Crystalline Optical Materials (ALCOM), Ohio's only NSF supported Science and Technology Research Center. ALCOM facilitates joint research among scientists and engineers from the University of Akron, Case Western Reserve University, and Kent State University. The most extensive recent collaboration involving The University of Akron, Cleveland State University, Kent State University, and Youngstown State University is the proposed Ohio School of International Business (OSIB), which has already received start up funding from the Ohio General Assembly.

But OSIB also demonstrates the type of challenges universities face in undertaking major cooperative initiatives. In this case, the physical site of OSIB remains an unresolved issue among the four universities. Duplicating programs at the graduate level may also become a sticky issue in Northeast Ohio, especially in light of the attention this topic is receiving from the Ohio Board of Regents, a state level higher education coordinating council.

Fostering regional collaboration is a major goal stated inm KSUSP. Already the provosts from the University of Akron, Cleveland State University, Kent State University, Youngstown State University, and the Northeast Ohio Universities College of Medicine meet on a regular basis to discuss issues of mutual interest and promote a consortial point of view instead of institution specific ones. But are public universities in close proximity encouraged to plan together through appropriate incentives, or do politics, regulations, resource allocation processes at state and local levels, and institutional self-interest discourage truly collaborative efforts? Can universities really become regional citizens in ways that parallel the calls for faculty to become university citizens? If regional cooperation is to flourish, then provosts, with the encouragement and support of their presidents, will need to be statespeople in promoting collaborative academic programming and planning. Ultimately, however, the degree of collaboration among Northeast Ohio institutions will depend on presidential leadership, changes in institutional incentive structures and behaviors, a commitment to the regional good from local politicians as well as the institutions, and a recognition by the involved institutions that bigger is neither better nor affordable.

Concluding Observations

Many threads connect the seven themes of the preceding section, but there is one particularly prominent thread: the issues emanating from the themes will require shared leadership if they are to be addressed effectively. Determining and accepting **alternate measures of institutional success** at universities like Kent need to involve faculty and administrators at all levels, as well as governing boards and state officials. Operationalizing **an expanded view of scholarship**; valuing more notably **instructional activities**; **reducing undue program complexity**; emphasizing **teamwork, unit productivity and group rewards**; and stressing the importance of the **university citizen** will require shared leadership from and new understandings among faculty, department chairs, deans, provosts, and presidents. True **regional partnerships among institutions** call for leadership from local politicians, governing boards, presidents, provosts, and officials of state government as well as less institutional ego. All of these themes are easily stated, clearly relevant, and

hardly surprising. But a look to the next century suggests that the issues inherent to these themes will continue to represent challenges and opportunities, particularly to *almost metropolitan universities*.

Does Kent State University have many of the characteristics shared by metropolitan universities? Yes. Should a new category of *almost metropolitan universities* be coined to describe institutions like Kent that have evolved from traditional, residential university roots? Probably not. But whether they acknowledge it or not, the flavor and spirit of metropolitan universities are shared by those major, *traditional* institutions located in or near major population centers. And this is something to value and build upon.