

Key Achievements FY' 2020-21

Human Resources

Priority Two: A Distinctive Kent State

Drive innovation, idea generation and national distinction through top tier academic and research programs including the recruitment and support of talented faculty and staff

HR Communications

- Faculty/Staff News Now (FSNN) continues to consistently produce an open rate between 45 and 50 percent for users.
- FSNN continued to publish weekly issues after the university closed during the COVID-19 pandemic. FSNN also provided support, news and information related to how faculty, staff and students are dealing with the pandemic. The corresponding website ranks eighth among all HR sites with more than 6,200 views since July 1, 2020.
- Overall, 219 out of 600 employees completed the Great Colleges to Work For survey in 2021. Consequently, participation in 2021 increased to our highest response rate ever at 37 percent, up from 34 percent in 2020. Further, participation increased in all four categories: Administration, Exempt, Faculty, Non-exempt. The largest increases in the survey participation were for administrative and exempt employees, each up 2 percent year-over-year.
- Employee Resource Groups (ERGS) have continued to partner with the Division of Human Resources in the re-branding of the Kent Young Professional Group to a strategic mentoring opportunity for employees. The newest ERG, still in the preliminary stages of development, is geared toward the Asian American/Pacific Islander community. Training and Development will assist in the coordination of virtual and/or person-to-person programming for the group.

Employee Wellness - Nationally Recognized

- The Kent State Employee Wellness program, Wellness Your Way, has not only become nationally recognized, but also perceived as a significant recruitment and retention tool

to attract, retain and support the holistic wellbeing of Kent State's faculty and staff. In FY' 2020-21, Kent State's employee wellness program once again was the recipient of the American Heart Association's highest award, the Workplace Health Achievement Award (Gold), and the Healthy Business Council's Healthy Workplace Award (Gold).

- This past year required tenacity, resilience and the ability to pivot to be responsive to the health and wellbeing of our students, faculty and staff. Kent State Employee Wellness was honored to share our COVID-19 response with the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, specifically in the category of *Teacher, Faculty and Staff Well-Being, Professional Development, and Supports*. Kent State was invited to share our campus strategies to address the social, emotional, health, and other needs of faculty and staff to become part of the Safer Schools and Campuses Best Practices Clearinghouse. Invited respondents will have their best practices included as part of the Clearinghouse for access and sharing to stakeholders across Federal agencies.

Priority Five: Organizational Stewardship

Ensure a culture of continuous improvement and the efficient stewardship of university resources and infrastructure

HR Training and Development

Anti-Racism Task Force (ARTF) and Subcommittees

1. Member of the Anti-Racism Task Force. The purpose of the Anti-Racism Task Force (ARTF) is to examine the ways that racism, particularly anti-Black racism, exist and persist at Kent State University.

- ARTF - Co-Chair, Education for our faculty and staff – laying the groundwork for educating faculty and staff; background, examine data from the climate study, focus on systemic issues (for example, we have over 100 cultures at our university. How can it be reflected in our education?) providing resources, research, best practices and past surveys (internally and externally)
- ARTF, 2021 Climate Study subcommittee on Race: Our Voices Count – The subcommittee was responsible for creating a survey designed to provide information that could help Kent State create and maintain a healthy, inclusive environment for all. The university-wide climate study, "Race: Our Voices Count" was conducted to understand the current climate that exists at the university's Northeast Ohio locations. It was available spring 2021.

- ARTF, Climate Study Data Analysis Subcommittee – The subcommittee is responsible for qualitative and quantitative data analysis of the 2021 Climate Study results. All subcommittee members will be included in the IRB application.
- Steering Committee - Creation of the Institute for Anti-Racism and Equity Studies, Subcommittee 1: Mission Statement and Vision – To create the mission and vision for the institute. Current Mission and Vision: This proposed research-oriented institute is designed to advance and promote understanding, communication, education, and activism about racial, ethnic, and social justice through rigorous and accessible scholarship and creative activity...

2. Staff Anti-Racism Diversity Workshops - Training and Development is responsible for communication, managing the application process, tracking course completion, and working with Records and Payroll to get participants paid. Kent State is committed to be a diverse, inclusive and equitable place for all who work, visit, live and study here. To support this commitment, a workshop series for staff has been organized by the Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, the Center for Teaching and Learning and the Training and Development department. All sessions will be held throughout the summer and fall semesters, with all sessions held virtually. Staff who are accepted are required to attend all five sessions and submit reflections for each session. Those who fully complete the program will receive a stipend of \$1,000.

3. Employee Resource Groups Council - Mission statement: Employee Resource Groups provide a space for our diverse workforce to network around common interests, serve as an advocate for leveraging university shared governance and contribute to an inclusive workplace by providing a welcoming environment, university knowledge and professional development. All of the groups have open membership.

Blended Training & Development Courses:

- SafeColleges Course completions 6084 (1529 unique users)
- 66 workshops & webinars (3, 451 course completions)
- 262 Assessments
- 299 HR Hiring Certifications
- 401 completed Blackboard archived workshops
- Customized sessions:
 - Six Training Development sessions for intact teams
 - Five Individual Training Development Plans
 - I4E Alumni Professional Development - 4 book club and 10 professional development discussions

Talent Acquisition, Compensation and HR Records

Ensuring Kent State's Future

Steps to a Fiscal Year 2021 Balanced Budget

On April 27, 2020 Todd Diacon, the President of Kent State University, detailed the financial situation we faced as a result of the pandemic. In an effort to balance the budget, several measures were put in place and Human Resources played a key role in most of those efforts.

The relevant cost saving measures are listed below:

1. Current hiring freeze will continue – several departments in HR were a part of this process including Talent Acquisition
2. Reduction of Fiscal Year 2021 Operating Budgets
 - **Salary adjustment model**
 - Reductions occurred effective 7/1/2020 for approximately 1,500 employees
 - Salaries were restored effective October 1, 2020, and February 1, 2021.
 - Retroactive Pay was implemented for all those affected on the first paycheck in March 2021.
 - **Alternate leave implementation**
 - In conjunction with the salary reductions, affected employees received alternate leave days that could be used in lieu of or in addition to vacation days to be used no later than June 30, 2021.
 - HR collaborated with IT to add another leave category to time reporting so that reporting the alternative leave days would be an automated process.
 - **Layoffs and Job abolishments**
 - HR representatives met with campus, college and division leadership to help identify positions for layoff and abolishment and managed the process according to policies and procedures.
 - Through the summer and fall of 2020 59 positions were identified which represented an annual cost of an estimated \$2.8 million

Voluntary Separation Incentive Program and the Voluntary Faculty Separation Incentive

Numerous departments within the Division of Human Resources collaborated with IT, Academic Personnel, and Payroll to organize, announce and implement the Voluntary Faculty Separation Incentive Program (VFSIP), and Voluntary Transitional Opportunity between February 1 through March 31. A VFSIP summary is directly below.

An informational hub was created to include:

- Plan document
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
- Links to DocuSign election documents
- Targeted emails to eligible participants

The plan was administered in-house without using a vendor for any services, resulting in 55 participants (48 faculty and 7 administrators with faculty status), and an annual salary totaling approximately \$5.8 million.

Voluntary Transitional Opportunity (VTO) for Full-time Faculty Members

Full-time faculty members who decided to retire as part of Kent State University's Voluntary Separation Incentive Plan (VFSIP) may have an opportunity to continue part-time employment with the University for up to three academic years. As part of a comprehensive effort to address the significant budget shortfall created by the COVID-19 pandemic, Kent State University's Board of Trustees has approved a Voluntary Transitional Opportunity (VTO) for retiring full-time faculty members.

Retiring faculty members who are interested in participating in the VTO should contact their academic unit administrator (e.g., Department Chair, School Director, College or Regional Campus Dean) to discuss opportunities for part-time employment after retirement. Faculty members can initiate their participation in the VTO by completing an application for part-time employment with the University. These part-time employment opportunities are contingent on the needs of the academic unit and will be determined annually by the academic unit administrator in consultation with the faculty member.

Any faculty member who is retiring as part of the University's VFSIP and who is considering participation in the VTO is strongly encouraged to contact human resources, academic personnel, her/his selected retirement system or alternative retirement plan, tax advisor and/or Medicare or other applicable health benefits provider(s) to determine the potential impact of participation in the VTO on an individual's retirement benefits.

Employee Benefits

Initiative 5.1: Create a healthy campus initiative that prioritizes the health and wellness of students, faculty and staff.

Health Strategy

As part of Kent State's health and wellness strategy, the Benefits team has worked alongside senior leadership in its efforts to offer quality, affordable, and competitive healthcare benefits that support our healthy campus initiative, mitigate rising healthcare costs and apply effective business practices that engage stakeholders and constituents in understanding healthcare benefits and trends through effective communications, training and outreach strategies.

- Hit highest completion rate of 75% of all benefits eligible employees accessing and completing the open enrollment process for Calendar Year beginning Jan. 1, 2021, through an aggressive communication strategy
- Increased participation in HDHP by 10% from previous year for a total of 769 participants (22% of total eligible)
- Proposed pharmaceutical strategy with potential savings of \$1,000,000/year with no added costs to plan or participants (PrudentRX)

Initiative 5.3: Establish a culture of sustainability and continuous improvement

The Employee Benefits Department has undergone a re-structuring and is committed to streamlining processes, continuous improvement and data integrity. With a list of short and long-term projects, the department has:

- Conducted a full inventory of reporting tools and established internal processes to run monthly audit reports to clean up and catch data integrity issues that may adversely impact employee coverages and/or contributions
- Developed an automated payment portal (using Cashnet) for employees in furlough, layoff, or unpaid leave status to collect monthly premium contributions reducing need for "catch up" deductions if and when employee return to work
- Automated annual opt-out verification process using DocuSign
- Redesigned Employee Benefits website to better meet the needs of our employees
- Ex. Director, Employee Benefits will serve on the Defined Contribution Retirement Plans Committee and co-lead the implementation process. As a member of the Committee, responsibilities will include ensuring that the Defined Contribution Plans are properly administered and that they are invested in accordance with 3342-6-10 University policy regarding retirement, applicable standards of prudence, and approved Investment Policy Statements. This will affect the KSU ARP Plan, KSU 403(b) Plan, and the KSU 457(b) Deferred Compensation Plan. Employees will experience lower fees, increased services around financial wellbeing, and improved automation to facilitate investments and other transactions through a common remitter.

We look forward with an attitude of optimism and commitment to improving the lives of those we serve by providing accurate, timely and employee-focused care and attention throughout the employee life cycle.

Lean Processing

Employee Benefits is spearheading the improvement of the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) leave process at KSU using the Lean process. The first phase of this process will be completed by August, 2021.

Employee Wellness

Initiative 5.1: Create a healthy campus initiative that prioritizes the health and wellness of students, faculty and staff.

The Employee Wellness team continues to prioritize the health and wellbeing of our students, faculty and staff by using a holistic, social ecological model to address and focus resources on measures that allow our faculty and staff to thrive. Although there has been a significant focus on how imperative this has become during COVID, we feel very fortunate that the employee wellness program proved how vital these benefits and services have been and remain to be for our Kent State faculty and staff. Below are some key achievements:

- **Awards & Distinction:** For FY 2020-21, Kent State's workplace wellness program was recognized, again, at the highest level of distinction (Gold) by the American Heart Association.
- **FWA Policy Change:** Proposed an enhanced Flexible Work Arrangement Policy to include telecommuting in response to the post-pandemic workplace that demands flexibility in the workplace.
- **COVID-19 Responsiveness:** Employee Wellness has played a significant role in supporting its faculty and staff through COVID-19 and the transition to telework over an extended period of time that we could have never predicted. Support includes high-touch in the moment resources, such as our Telework Hub, tele-mental health resources, ongoing virtual offerings to engage in whole person wellbeing, such as webinars on managing multiple roles, self-care, grief, financial wellness, and in-person preventive services that included "Know Your Numbers" health screenings and flu vaccine clinics. *See **Attachment A** for a quick-reference.*
- **Leadership:** Kent State Executive Director for Employee Benefits, Wellness and Health Promotion has been recognized as one of the Top 10 Health Promotion Professionals by Wellness Council of America.

Employee Wellness continues to play a significant role in collaborating across campus serving on various committees and initiatives to promote a culture of well-being. This includes serving on the COVID-19 Pandemic Committee, Mental Health Visioning Committee, Kent State of Wellness, and others to “prioritize the health and wellness of our faculty, staff and students.” In addition, we continue to partner and leverage external resources, including our IUC partners, PNC, MMO, National Wellness Institute, American Psychological Association, Wellness Council of America, Health Action Council and Employers Health.

Employee and Labor Relations

Controlled Substance and Alcohol Testing Program

Employee and Labor Relations is now responsible for the pre-employment testing for controlled substances for a Commercial Drivers License (CDL) of candidates who have been chosen for positions that require a CDL in their job description. We also schedule pre-employment testing for controlled substances of candidates for Police Dispatchers. To date, there has been 100 percent compliance and a 100 percent negativity rate for all tested. We continue to maintain the quarterly controlled substance and alcohol testing for all CDL holders.

- Employee and Labor Relations spearheaded the development of Staff Council, which provides an opportunity for classified and unclassified staff to engage in information-sharing and advice with senior administration. Among other things, the Staff Council will act as a forum for the expression of questions, concerns and suggestions – and as a formal means for discussion of important topics.
- Applications were received and reviewed. Preparations were made to schedule the first meeting with those chosen as participants when the Covid-19 pandemic closed campuses and put employees in a work-from-home mode. The department plans to move forward in the fall, with permission of course.
- Completed fall temporary layoff of university dining employees and parking services employees. A financial savings for both departments.
- Implemented early recall for 75 plus dining services employees to meet the required openings of three units.

- Implemented a staff reduction process for over 60 university employees in order to comply with budget reductions.
- Negotiations completed and ratified on October 1, 2020 with AFSCME Local 153 and Ohio Council 8.
- Implementation of the AFSCME Perfect Attendance Program which began with the fourth quarter in 2020. In conjunction with IT built an online application process which launched February 1, 2021.
- Taking responsibility for the Lateral Transfer process for AFSCME open positions within UFM and DIning. Built a comprehensive tracking system to maintain data required for this internal process. Originally housed in Talent Acquisition.
- Completed the yearly evaluation process for classified and unclassified employees. All evaluations were transferred to a file to be added to employee web extender in Banner.

Office of Compliance and EOAA

- EOAA and SAS collaborated and created the pandemic adjustment request form (PARF) for students, faculty and staff. This form is used to allow the staff to suggest alternative mask options such as the plastic face shield in lieu of wearing a cloth facial covering. The PARF went into effect for Fall 2020 semester, and during that time til present EOAA has distributed a total of 419 face shields.
- EOAA partnered with Office of General Counsel and Student Accessibility Services and created the Events Accessibility Policy. A policy that provides requirements for administrative offices and instructional units of the university in planning university sponsored events accessible to all attendees in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. A presentation was conducted on March 25, 2021 to all the designated event coordinators university wide and to the Student Affairs leadership group on April 13, 2021 to brief them on the new policy. The policy 3342-5-12.401 became effective on April 2, 2021.
- Beginning in March 2020, the university went into remote work status due to COVID-19. From March 2020 to present, EOAA was still able to effectively evaluate and consider all accommodation requests submitted in Salesforce utilizing MS Teams and Cisco Jabber. EOAA received and engaged in the interactive process for approximately 56 faculty, staff and student employees accommodation requests.
- With the issuance of new Title IX regulations effective August 14, 2020, key university partners joined together to develop two new Chapter 5 administrative policies and procedures: the Administrative policy regarding complaints of Title IX sexual harassment

and the Administrative policy and procedures regarding complaints of unlawful discrimination and harassment. Both policies reaffirm the University's long-held commitment to create workplace and educational environments free from discrimination, sexual harassment, and sexual violence. Both policies also provide guidance on the availability of support services or supportive measures, informal resolutions, as well as the grievance process and procedures.

- The final Title IX regulations effective August 14, 2020 also required all staff involved in Title IX administration and investigations to be professionally trained. Well over 10 administrators in various capacities including, Compliance Staff, Investigators, Appeals Officers, and Decision-Makers received training. This cross-divisional training endeavor included key stakeholders in Human Resources, the Office of the Provost, and Student Affairs who each received and completed annually required Clery Act and Title IX basic and advanced training.
- Following an institutional wide halt to in-person educational and operational initiatives during mid-March of 2020, the Office of Compliance, EOAA modified its existing in person prevention education and workshop series for students, student athletes, faculty, and staff to be administered fully remote and through a variety of virtual platforms. Our office successfully provided more than 30 prevention education sessions and beyond compliance workshops for the Kent State university community using online platforms.

Points of Pride 2020-21

Human Resources

Divisional Points of Pride

Kent State Named as Great College to Work For in 2020

For the ninth time, Kent State University is being recognized in three different categories as a "Great College to Work For" by The Chronicle of Higher Education, a top trade publication for colleges and universities.

Kent State University won honors in three categories this year:

1. Confidence in Senior Leadership

Senior leadership was defined as the most senior members of the institution (e.g. Chancellor or President and those who directly report to them). There are six statements on the survey that directly reference senior leadership, one example being Statement 27: Senior leadership provides a clear direction for this institution's future.

2. Facilities, Workspace and Security

Three statements comprise this category, notably Statement 29: The institution takes reasonable steps to provide a safe and secure environment for the campus.

3. Work/Life Balance

This recognition category is based on two factors: the combined results of three specific survey statements, notably “This institution's policies and practices give me the flexibility to manage my personal and family life” along with responses to the benefits like Work/Life Balance programs and Vacation/PTO.

Forbes Puts Flashes First in Region, Fourth in State

On the heels of being named a Great College to Work For, Kent State is the also considered the best place to work in Northern Ohio and the top higher ed employer in the state, according to the Forbes 2020 America's Best-in-State Employers.

Kim Hauge

- Promoted to Executive Director, Employee Benefits, Wellness and Health Promotion
- Completed Lean Practitioner Training, April, 2021
- Continue to serve on several KSU and external committees (GPI, Kent State of Wellness, Mental Health Vision Committee, Defined Contribution Retirement Plans Steering Committee, KSU Pandemic Committee, IMPACT Board of Advisors, IUC Wellness Directors, etc.)
- Board Member – Habitat for Humanity, Portage County

Deanna Duffy

- Secretary and membership chair for the Kent Engaged and Emerging Professionals or KEEP

Monica Guinn

- Member of the UDAC (University Diversity Action Council) Hiring Practices Committee

Joe Richardson

- Member of Accreditation Accountability Committee (formerly Higher Learning Committee)

Renee Romine

- Chair the Employee Resource Groups Council

- Anti-Racism Task Force Committee
- Co-chair for the Education for Our Faculty and Staff subcommittee
- Member of the Climate Study Survey Analysis subcommittee

Ron Smith

- VP, Strategic Events for Cleveland Society for Human Resources Management

Karen Watson

- Treasurer for the Latino Networking Caucus (Employee Resource Group)
- Facilitator for the Kent State University Council (Prepared to initiate process when COVID-19 pandemic delayed the process)