One of Schwartz’s first proposals—to require all undergraduates to take a core liberal arts curriculum—was arguably his most significant and valiant. The aim was to stem the inordinate influence of professional accrediting bodies on curricula and degree requirements, as well as to reverse the trend toward vocationalism by generalizing the concept of the university as a place where a student could acquire a common, unifying body of knowledge. Although the Liberal Education Requirements program (LER) program—though it exposed the student’s self-serving narcissism of various curricular committees—may not have been all he had hoped for, it ensured that for a time Kent students would breathe the bracing airs of the Western intellectual tradition.

Twice during the decade Schwartz, seeking a creative equilibrium, had the school’s mission statement revised, first accenting undergraduate and, later, research and graduate programs. To cut back attrition rates and improve quality, he persuaded the Faculty Senate to set admission standards keyed to high school GPA’s. Several doctoral programs, along with two major institutes—in Applied Linguistics and Translation Studies and in International Programs—were effectively internationalizing the University. The whole campus became handicapped accessible and welcoming. And it began the process of becoming computerized: campus operations were computerized, computer terminals glowed in every nook and office. Some major academic buildings were added—including the Mathematical Sciences Building and the Child Development Center. The Field House was built beside Dix Stadium, and the University School was given new form and function as the Michael Schwartz Center housing student services. The much-needed renovation of Front Campus began, appropriately, with McGilvrey Hall. And the university’s “buy-outs,” which followed the normal managerial trend in higher education, cut the faculty positions and took through five-year, early-retirement buyouts thereafter. The second such “buy-out” in 1996 took 235 faculty—most of White’s “Young Turks.”
Although state support continued to drop, enrollments—and student fees—rose steadily. So did faculty salaries. Merit incentives—first in research, then in teaching and service—were written into several collective bargaining contracts. Every few years the administration was forced to mud-rassle over a contract with the faculty union.

In sports, the baseball, basketball, gymnastics, and wrestling teams had notable seasons. Coach Herb Page's golf teams dominated the MAC and, during the eighties and nineties, ranked among the best in the country. In the '90s, the women's varsity teams were uniformly outstanding: the basketball team won the MAC title in 1998. But the football teams were hapless.

Student styles were less bizarre than in the psychedelic, polyester seventies: Long, straight hair, parted in the middle, gave way to hair cut shorter and styled. Hip-hugging bell-bottom blue jeans gave way to sweats and chinos; love beads, mood rings, and macrame belts to power ties; platform shoes and sandals to docksiders. (The favorite apparel of the Nineties for both men and women was baseball caps and blue jeans.) Ingeniously constructed lofts and theme parties—Beach Party, Toga Party, Hairy Buffalo Party—were residence hall fads. Halloween became a major festival, attracting thousands of cleverly costumed students and spectators to downtown Kent. Schwartz's—and the University's—most satisfying moment came May 4, 1990, a year before he resigned. On a chill rainy day more than 4,000 people huddled under umbrellas beside Taylor Hall for the dedication of the memorial to the four students killed twenty years earlier on a hot sunny day. The bitter-sweet, cathartic moment of resolution came when Ohio Governor Richard Celeste formally apologized on behalf of the state for the tragedy.