

KAPLAN UNIVERSITY LONG-RANGE PLAN

2017–2019 | 11TH EDITION



KAPLAN UNIVERSITY LONG-RANGE PLAN

2017–2019 | 11TH EDITION

Contents

I.	Introduction	2
II.	University Guiding Principles	2
III.	Guiding Theme: It's About Time	2
IV.	Key Indicators: Growth, Graduation, and Reputation	3
V.	Growth	4
VI.	Graduation	5
VII.	Reputation	7
VIII.	Plan Development Process	8
IX.	Building Blocks	8

Introduction

Kaplan University (KU) embraces long-range planning as the driver to achieve our mission and vision. We are a lifelong partner for career improvement and this Plan outlines our strategic alignment of resources to fulfill that role.

KU works actively to understand the skills, competencies, and proficiencies sought by employers. We then develop academic programs and educational experiences designed to produce graduates well prepared for the world of work.

We deeply value our students' time and previous educational experiences. With our innovative and effective delivery modes and support structures we work hard to help them graduate with lower cost, in less time, and with the competencies necessary for rewarding careers.

Our planned trajectory continues to honor these central precepts. This Plan is important because it describes how we will retain what is best about KU while remaining flexible and strategic as we confront the ever-changing landscapes of student needs, workplace demands, and higher education in general. By rallying around our strengths we will reinvent our institution.

We believe that planning for the long term while retaining the agility to respond to sudden changes is our best guarantee of ever-greater successes in growth, graduation, and institutional reputation—in short, of truly fulfilling our institutional mission and vision.

University Guiding Principles

The Kaplan, Inc., Vision Statement rallies all of the Kaplan businesses around the goal of being, collectively, the best global educator by 2020. Kaplan University plays a significant role in that vision, namely, the best educator for careers.

The mission and vision statements are truly foundational at KU, and guide our thinking and actions at every level:

Mission

Kaplan University is an institution of higher learning dedicated to providing innovative undergraduate, graduate, and continuing professional education. Our programs foster student learning with opportunities to launch, enhance, or change careers in a diverse global society. The University is committed to general education, a student-centered service and support approach, and applied scholarship in a practical environment.

Vision

Best Educator for Careers: Serve as a lifelong partner for career development by delivering a best-in-class educational experience with an unmatched commitment to student success.

Guiding Theme: It's About Time

Our guiding theme, "Time," forces us to think about how we interact with students, how we construct and manage internal processes, how we design and deliver our courses, and even how we approach our own daily work. It will be, in a sense, our yardstick in our assessment of success in achievement of the strategies outlined in this Plan.



Kaplan University, Cedar Rapids, campus

The dimension of time will guide us in our focus on three critical aspects of the University's health: Growth, Graduation, and Reputation. Think of each of these as an axis in a three-dimensional space. By focusing on optimizing the "time" aspect of each of these, we will improve the University in such a way that we ensure a robust student census, excellent student learning and graduation outcomes, and the fulfillment of our many roles within the communities of which we are a part. Excellence in all three of the areas of Growth, Graduation, and Reputation, when placed in this context, will lead us to our goal of being the world's best educator for careers by 2020.

Kaplan University faces strong environmental headwinds. Like skilled sailors, we will move forward despite these, even using them to our advantage when we can. However, we must also create favorable winds of our own.

To do this we have assembled a comprehensive portfolio of initiatives designed to fill our sails. Some of these are small in scope, others are institutional. Each is meant to drive forward motion in tangible, measurable ways. Throughout, we fully acknowledge the particular challenges we face as an institution, the complex and interconnected nature of our university, and a clear commitment to the greater communities of which we are part.

KU has an unwavering commitment to its mission statement and to its core values. They underpin every aspect of our culture and inform each decision we make, large or small. They inform the way we define our goal and path to it over the next 3 years. Every effort we undertake is also underpinned by our "Great Place" efforts and, in turn, every initiative must further promote that goal.

Key Indicators: Growth, Graduation, and Reputation

We have selected three areas of particular attention for the coming years. These represent key dimensions of institutional health. Each project we undertake is expected to create positive movement in one or more of these. For instance, by designing a degree that deeply

honors a student's prior learning, we can attract as students some portion of that large population who are aware of the intrinsic value of the knowledge they already have and who know a university that honors it will require less of their time to earn a degree. This will promote "Growth" but also, indirectly, "Graduation," and possibly even "Reputation."

Growth

We will spend time seeking new ways to grow. Our primary focus will be on growing as a place of learning but we will also seek growth of our student census and revenues. We can do both of these by seeking out new relationships with companies, the military, international entities, and our communities.

Graduation

We will spend time finding ways to ensure that students graduate. We succeed at this today, but in a time of shortages of skilled candidates it is even more crucial that we help students to graduate so they are well positioned for career opportunities. We will ensure that our competencies, courses, degrees, and support are relevant to the careers students seek and employers value.

Reputation

We will spend time building reputation. We will strengthen our relationships with students by improving their experience. We will engage increasingly with businesses and communities to develop tailored solutions. As with other important investments in this area, we will maintain and increase our relationships with key programmatic accreditors and with employers. We will continue our work to build strong interdepartmental and internal personal relationships.

Growth

Growth is a natural ambition for an institution. We seek to reach the widest number of people with what we believe is a superior learning model, delivered by outstanding faculty and administered by thoughtful staff and efficient systems. Kaplan University will always work to meet the needs of the adult learner, who is our core student. There are, however, unmet needs in this population that we can fulfill and we expect to grow by meeting them.

TIME WELL SPENT

KU's Associate of Science in Health Science (ASHS) program was initiated several years ago in direct response to a specific unmet need presented by the military and has become a mainstay program. Now, in 2016, we have been asked to enhance it to meet a new need: enabling soldiers to sit for a key licensing examination. We have created a new concentration within the ASHS and now it will take less time for soldiers to transition into civilian life because they will hold this sought-after certification before leaving the service.

The College of Social and Behavioral Sciences continues to focus on the development of external partnerships by degree program. What started with one program has now evolved to include several programs and focuses on Enrollments, Externships, and Employment (EEE). Our increased investment of time in developing closer, long-term relationships with organizational and institutional partners continues to yield enrollments, enables us to identify externship sites for students, and helps to open up employment opportunities. This collaborative effort between academic department chairs, admissions, marketing, and career services promotes growth for the College as well as additional opportunities for students.

We envision:

- students fine-tuning their degree pace in ways that transcend the traditional n classes/term, depending on their own personal circumstances at a given time.
- noninstitutional learning (military, corporate training, experiential) fitting meaningfully into degrees: not merely as elective credit, but as part of the fabric of the degree and curriculum.
- using our curricular assets in dynamic, learner-centered ways, making learning via multiple delivery models seamless for the student and cost-effective for the University.
- eliminating operational hurdles, keeping students enrolled without interruptions to their study.

We will:

- launch competency-based education (CBE) programs and course modularization, thereby:
 - making KU more appealing to a wider range of students; and
 - saving students time and expense.
- seek new markets by:
 - expanding our solutions-based partnerships with the military, corporations, peer institutions, and other community partners;
 - shifting our marketing to direct channels and revise our product management and marketing strategies;
 - expanding our international recruitment; and
 - developing new degree pathways, including nondegree-to-degree paths and stackable degrees.



We succeed when:

- Our census for KU online and ground campuses is 34,000 in 2019.
- Ten degrees are available in our ExcelTrack model and 10% of our student census is in them. All lower-division courses are available in both standard and modularized formats by 2019.
- New agreements are signed with 12 major corporate partners in 2017, four in 2018, and five in 2019.
- By 2019, 71% of our prospective students come from direct marketing and partnerships rather than aggregators.

Graduation

Watching students graduate at our annual commencement exercises never fails to remind each of us that we must strive to remove any distraction that causes even a single student not to ultimately walk across our stage. All the research and thinking on the subject of student graduation rates agrees on one thing—that it is a complex, multivariate problem. It is no different at KU, though we feel we have specific attributes on which we can build that will allow us to help our unique population of students.

TIME WELL SPENT

The recently launched Bachelor of Science in Professional Studies program (Open College@KU) enjoyed graduating its first student this summer. This student came to us with 165 credits from various institutions but no degree. Many of these courses were applied to the degree requirements; she had only to “fill in a few gaps” and did so by customizing her degree to cover a range of professional interests. She plans to complete a master’s degree with KU soon.

Kaplan University students may take the course EL 206: Academic Prior Learning Portfolio to earn credit for their work and life experiences. EL 206 generally fills an elective slot on students’ degree plans. Students are guided through a process of creating an online experiential learning portfolio to showcase their learning from the workplace, volunteering, military training, etc. During the last year, students who submitted a prior learning portfolio earned 28 credits on average, the equivalent of more than two terms of work and about \$10,000 in tuition. These students, when compared to similar students who did not take EL 206, are also twice as likely to graduate.



We envision:

- providing more flexible degree options to better suit the needs of our students.
- continuing to hone the craft of teaching through constant assessment, critical use of data, and support of faculty.
- implementing a leading learning management system (LMS) to support our faculty and students.
- engaging in ongoing improvement of policies, processes, technology, and our service organization.
- continuing our focus on career-related outcomes, which permeate our curriculum, teaching, service, and philosophy.

We will:

- support and innovate in teaching by:
 - implementing a leading LMS to improve teaching/learning dynamics;
 - expanding our Research Pipeline, so we can learn what works in the classroom; and
 - investing further in predictive analysis so we can learn what support interventions work.

- make a holistic revision of the student experience based on recommendations of internal and external consultants.
- strive for operational excellence via Lean methodologies.
- complete development of remaining functionality builds and the priority audit toolset in Blueprint.
- innovate in career development and employment services so students can use their learning in the pursuit of their careers.

We succeed when:

- our degree-seeking graduation rate is 28% or higher for the next 3 years. Furthermore, initiatives begun in this LRP will increase the graduation rate upward to 40% by 2023.
- our websites, portal, and internal processes are reconfigured to optimize the student experience.
- we have fully deployed the new LMS and capitalized on its capabilities.
- we have completed the implementation of the Student Success Manager (SSM) Admissions/Advising model to improve persistence.

Reputation

A university is essentially an organic system, no part of which can exist on its own. A financial aid department, for instance, has no purpose without the rest of the university around it. It is less often remembered, though, how a university—any university—really has no purpose outside of the communities of which it is a part. KU seeks to be an active, respected, and contributing member to the many communities to which it belongs.

TIME WELL SPENT

The KU Career Services department has in a few short years positioned itself internally and nationally as a thought leader. From the recent implementation of CareerNetwork, a robust suite in which students and staff collaborate on job search and readiness, all in a gamified setting, to involvement in the National Association of Colleges and Employers Board, our Career Services team is dedicated to our students' professionalism and truly "walks the walk" themselves.

In spring 2016, Kaplan, Inc., was approached by Ithaka S+R, an independent nonprofit that helps the academic community navigate economic and technical changes. Ithaka publishes research and offers strategic guidance to help organizations understand important trends, learn from best practices, and leverage high-quality research. Their focus is on expanding access and improving student outcomes. Ithaka was interested in publishing a case study on Kaplan University's approach to learning engineering, our research pipeline, and use of randomized controlled trials to improve student outcomes. The case study was completed in October, and can be found at <http://www.sr.ithaka.org/publications/engineering-learning-at-kaplan-university>.

We envision:

- growing even more active in the national and international dialogues concerning higher education and related issues.
- becoming known as a thought-leading institution in areas such as assessment, use of data, and curricular innovation.
- continuing to recruit and retain a quality staff who are critical to our own community, but also as liaisons to their own home communities, professional societies, and to the public at large.
- recruiting and supporting faculty who will build our reputation through their achievements and contributions to knowledge and practice.
- actively engaging key constituents, that is, students, alumni, KU leadership, employers, and influencers, to help build our reputation across owned and earned media assets.

We will:

- engage as an active participant in national and professional initiatives, such as the Department of Education's Experimental Site Initiative (ESI) program, the Credit Transparency Initiative (CTI), and other thought-leading efforts.
- contribute to the discipline through membership in The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Persistence and Completion Academy, Peer Review Corps, and other opportunities for extramural engagement.
- increase our program-level accreditation approvals.
- expand on our professional engagements.
- build a communications architecture that will align relevant content that delivers unique value to each of our core audiences.
- publicize the professional achievements of faculty and graduates.
- drive positive change via our "Great Place" portfolio to make KU an ever-better place to work.

The “E8” – Overall Indicator of Engagement



We succeed when:

- we are successful in the ESI program (Limited Direct Assessment and Prior Learning Assessment).
- we have continued engagement in HLC Peer Corps, national-level pilot/research projects, and professional society leadership.
- we achieve +10 ppts increase nationally in brand preference and social sentiment scores.
- annual employee engagement survey results for Kaplan University are maintained at 67% or above.
- we sit on panels, boards, and committees related to the improvement of higher education.

Plan Development Process

The planning process for the 2017–2019 Long-Range Plan commenced in August 2015. More than 1,000 people, including faculty, staff, alumni, and students, participated in the listening sessions with the President of the University to provide input on what we do well, what we could do better, and where we need to be in 5 years. Other key inputs included research and analysis from our Strategic Planning and Analysis team and school advisory boards. The school-level plans were

developed in parallel and closely aligned with the overarching University strategies and priorities. The Plan development process included review at key intervals by the Board of Trustees, Faculty Senate, executive team, and accreditation teams, with the final Plan to be presented and approved by the Board of Trustees in December 2016.

Building Blocks

Much of the foundational work for this strategic path has been underway for the last 3 years (under KU 3.0 and LRP 10) with initiatives such as modularization, the Experimental Sites Initiative, Blueprint, integration of Professional Skills, the Outcomes Report, Student Relationship Management (SRM), the Student Success Manager (SSM) Advising Model, and partnership development and support. These efforts are the building blocks of our move toward providing educational flexibility, optimizing the time dimension, and promoting growth, graduation, and reputation metrics.

Each major departmental unit has developed its own long-range plan using a common framework. The sum of these coordinated efforts will result in institutional improvements as outlined above. The ownership and management of these initiatives at a “local” level ensures that our institutional goals can remain intact, even if the local priorities and needs shift during the 3 years of this Plan. In other words, we can remain relevant and responsive to the ever-changing world in which we operate, while maintaining the trajectory set forth by this Plan.

