

This aspiration is embodied in the following statements of KSU's mission, vision and values:

- Mission

- To provide distinctive education, produce creative research, serve society and contribute in building the knowledge economy and community through learning, creative thinking environment, the optimal use of technology and effective international partnership

- Vision

- To be a world class university and a leader in building the knowledge society

- Values

Based on our Islamic and cultural values, we uphold:

- Quality and excellence:

We measure ourselves according to challenging criteria, honoring high ambitions and the pursuit of distinctiveness through our commitment to the highest intellectual standards in teaching, learning and innovation

- Leadership and teamwork:

We remain committed to promoting individual and institutional leadership roles that drive social development upholding professionalism, responsibility, and innovation.

- Freedom of inquiry:

Rigorous and honest intellectual exploration is fundamental to our academic traditions, and it is reflected in all the dimensions of our scholarly activities.

- Fairness and integrity:

We abide by the principles of social justice, equal opportunity and cultural diversity, consequently holding the members of our community to the highest standards of honesty, respect, and professional ethics.

- Transparency and accountability:

We remain committed to expose our thinking and ideas for society and scholars to judge our contributions to global knowledge, and we hold accountable everybody in our community for respecting and upholding our values in all forms of their scholarly activities.

- Lifelong learning:

We are committed to lifelong learning inside and outside the KSU community, enhancing continued intellectual growth and welfare of the society.

Methodology

KSU's strategic planning process was designed to be highly participatory. Throughout this process, KSU's Strategic Planning Committee was committed to having all external and internal stakeholder groups contribute to the understanding of the challenges facing KSU and the development of the strategic objectives and initiatives.

The strategic plan had three major phases: a) diagnosis of current performance relative to aspirations and best-practice; b) development of strategic objectives and recommendations; and, c) development of an implementation plan to realize the strategy.

4. Strategic objectives Introduction

Introduction

The diagnostic section highlighted areas of improvements for King Saud University along the dimensions of a great university. The implications were numerous – several opportunities and challenges. It is the purpose of a strategic plan to provide a framework for addressing these implications through a set of decisions and recommended actions. Towards this end, we have selected nine strategic objectives that are critical to ensuring King Saud University's journey to a world-class research institution. The following section will present the case for each of these strategic objectives, as well as a set of recommendations supporting them. Below is a summary of each objective.

- **Strategic objective #1 – Good everywhere; Great in focus areas**
(Strengthen our comprehensive university with academic areas of research and teaching excellence)

King Saud University offers a wide spectrum of disciplines and areas of study. The variety of programs it offers has historically been its strength. Unfortunately, few programs beyond the health disciplines have reached any level of national or international distinction. If King Saud University is to achieve its aspiration of becoming a leading global university, it needs to achieve two goals. First it must improve its performance across all disciplines. Second, KSU needs to achieve distinction in a limited set of selected areas through increased focus on a few disciplines.

- **Strategic objective #2: Distinctive faculty**
(Attract and develop distinctive faculty)

A higher education institution is only as good as its faculty, and the conditions it creates to drive their performance. KSU should improve its faculty recruiting processes and provide the right environment (funding, support, performance management) to drive the expected performance levels.

- **Strategic objective #3: Less is more**

(Reduce KSU's student volume, increase the share of graduate students and raise entry requirements)

The size and mix of the student body (e.g., the ratio of undergraduate to graduate students) can have a significant effect on overall performance. In the case of King Saud University, with currently more than 110,000 students, the size is striking. Most of these students are undergraduates. This results in management challenges due to the sheer size, difficulty in achieving optimal faculty-student ratios, and a student mix not conducive to driving research activity. Reducing the number of students to more manageable levels (while increasing selectivity based on performance and thus overall student quality), and increasing the graduate body must be a priority for KSU.

- **Strategic objective #4: Stronger graduates**

(Enable KSU students to learn hard and soft skills throughout their academic life)

The quality of graduating students has a tremendous impact on the reputation of the institution. KSU currently graduates many students with weak soft and language skills compared to institutions in the Kingdom (and variable quality of hard skills). In order to improve the employability of King Saud University students, it is crucial to develop these skills and embed them in students' day to day learning and overall experience. Raising the quality of English should be done without compromising the cultural identity of the institution. Along with Strategic Objective #3 strengthening the preparatory and core years in delivering a full set of skills will improve the outcomes on graduates.

- **Strategic objective #5: Building bridges**

(Build bridges among KSU constituencies and externally with local and international groups)

King Saud University has already made some progress in connecting to the broader community. Still, these worthy efforts are not institutionalized or centrally managed and can benefit from a more comprehensive and coordi-

nated approach. Additionally, KSU will continue strengthening its links with the local community and building further bridges internally to improve cross-institution collaboration and inter-disciplinary research.

- Strategic objective #6: Supportive learning environment

(Create an engaging environment at KSU for faculty, students, and staff)

The quality of a university experience is not only dependent on the formal offering of the academic institution but is also shaped by the environment in which the learning and research experience takes place and how the members of the academic community engage with the society at large. It is important to note the physical infrastructure of the campus is impressive and will improve with the new Female campus construction underway. Still, given high levels of dissatisfaction from faculty and students alike in this area, KSU must continue improving its overall environment, building on existing efforts.

- Strategic objective #7: Sustainable future

(Build KSU's endowment and diversity sources of funding)

Leading universities, including public ones, have a diverse set of funding sources. In order for KSU to achieve its strategic goals it will need to execute several transformation programs, many of which will require significant resources. KSU will need to ensure the right amount and stability of finances for these efforts.

- Strategic objective #8: Flexibility and Accountability

(Create a performance contract between KSU and the government)

In order to drive significant change through its bold strategic vision, King Saud University will need to have the ability to make and execute tough decisions, act fast and firmly, be responsive to a fast-changing and competitive global knowledge economy, and change many of the current status quo processes and systems. This will require a higher degree of freedom than is currently available to KSU in governing, operating, and ultimately changing itself. This can be achieved through a partnership with the government based on funding and more flexibility in return for key outputs and metrics for

which KSU can be held accountable.

- Strategic objective #9: Organizing for purpose

(Establishing an organization and governance that supports KSU's goals)

Several issues within the current organization (e.g., complex and large structure) and governance (e.g., concentration of decision rights) of KSU are leading to ineffective decision making and inefficient functioning of the University. As KSU embarks on its journey towards becoming a globally leading research-based university, the organization and governance of KSU will need to evolve to enable better decision making and support world-class research and teaching.

As seen above, strategic objectives are the building blocks of the strategic plan; each one addressing either a structural element, an internal or external constituent or striving to establish beacons of excellence that will enable KSU to strengthen all their programs. These objectives can be grouped into 3 layers:

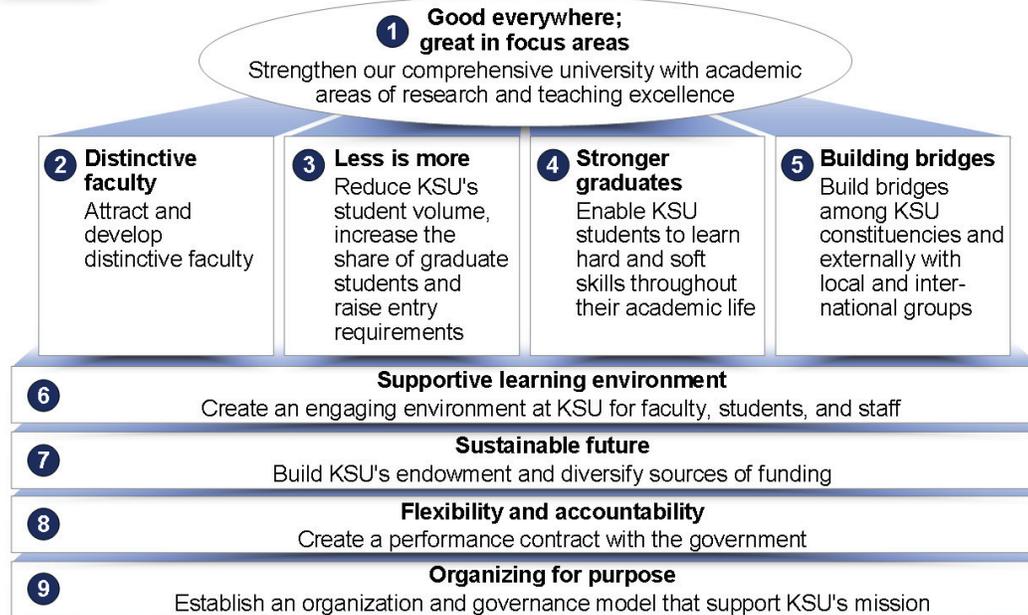
- The pinnacle:

Strategic objective #1 represents what ultimately the institution will be known for at the end of the 20 year plan. It defines the need to create discipline areas that will serve as beacon of excellence and global recognition while raising the quality levels of all other disciplines.

The diagnostic points to nine strategic objectives to support KSU's mission

KSU's mission

To provide distinctive **education**, produce creative **research**, serve **society** and contribute in building the **knowledge economy** and community through learning, creative thinking **environment**, the optimal use of **technology** and effective international **partnership**



Source: KSU Strategic Planning Committee; team analysis

20

- The pillars:

Strategic objectives #2 to 5 recognize the need to specifically raise the quality of faculty, students and interactions within and outside the institution. These objectives directly drive the pinnacle and KSU's aspirations as they address the inputs that are at the core of research, teaching, and overall quality of the institution – faculty, students, and their interactions internally and externally with the broader community..

- The foundation:

In order to achieve all the above objectives, especially the pillars, the institution as a whole will need to adapt, its organization structure and processes, improve the overall environment, and secure more freedom to operate through a government contract and more funding sources. These objectives