
Coles College of Business
2014 AACSB Fifth Year Continuous Improvement Review (CIR) Report
Section II – Situational Analysis

A. Historical, National, and Local Factors

Having recently celebrated its 50th anniversary, Kennesaw State University (KSU) is the third-largest institution in the University System of Georgia (USG); a public, comprehensive university with a variety of degree programs at the baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral level. KSU is located in Kennesaw, Georgia, one of metropolitan Atlanta's growing northwest suburban communities.

Established in 1963 as a Junior College, KSU became a senior college in 1976, first offered graduate programs in 1985, and is currently one of 31 public colleges and universities within the USG. KSU's remarkable growth has led to a Fall 2013 enrollment of 22,621 undergraduates and 2,008 graduate students (24,629 total students), including approximately 1,500 students from 130 foreign countries. University data show a student gender distribution of 59% female and 41% male with 32% percent of the student population comprised of ethnic minorities. The student body is a mix of traditional and nontraditional students with an average age of 25 (23 for undergraduates, 34 for graduate students). As of Academic Year 2012-13, KSU employed 747 full-time and 609 part-time faculty.

Early in the decade of 2000-2009, KSU experienced tremendous growth. Due in large part to Georgia's HOPE Scholarship Program and new housing on campus, KSU's undergraduate headcount grew by double-digit percentages. From 2004 to 2011, KSU maintained a steady headcount growth between three to seven percent annually, but in line with national and state trends, enrollment has flattened since then. Growth in 2012 was 2%, while in 2013 it was about 0.1%. However, in 2013, KSU was one of only four institutions in the USG to achieve enrollment growth. During the same time, the composition of the student body changed. Early in the previous decade, the average age of KSU students was 27 and the mix of full- and part-time students was much more balanced. As noted above, the average age of KSU undergraduate students is now 23 and 73% percent of our students attend full-time.

Nationally and locally, at least two trends are apparent. One, mentioned above, is that college enrollments are flattening or declining. Locally, as noted above, KSU is one of only four USG institutions, to increase its enrollment in Fall 2013. Second, the costs of post-secondary education have increased at a rate much faster than the rate of inflation. This fact has put higher education under a microscope and has resulted in reduced funding from state governments. The USG has responded by making the delivery of higher education more cost efficient through consolidation of some of its member institutions. In recent years, there have been four consolidations, reducing the number of member institutions from 35 to 31, while a fifth consolidation is underway between KSU and Southern Polytechnic State University (SPSU), a primarily engineering and technical institution located approximately ten miles south of the KSU campus. After the consolidation in 2015 (more below), the anticipated enrollment of the "new KSU" will be in excess of 31,000 students.

The Coles College of Business (CCB) was established as a separate academic unit within Kennesaw State University in 1980. The College earned initial AACSB accreditation of its undergraduate and graduate programs in 1994 and accounting programs in 2001. Today, the Coles College of Business enrolls approximately 5,400 students and has 148 full-time faculty members. Consistent with KSU, the College’s enrollments have been mostly flat for the past few years. While the College’s undergraduate enrollment has experienced modest growth, graduate programs have declined, primarily due to increased emphasis on student quality.

The Metropolitan Atlanta marketplace for business education is a crowded one. “Research University” competitors such as Emory, Georgia Tech (GT), University of Georgia (UGA), and Georgia State (GSU) offer programs in Metro Atlanta, while Mercer and West Georgia (UWG) are also direct competitors locally. Georgia Southern (Ga. So.), while not offering programs locally, does recruit heavily, particularly undergraduate students in this area.

B. Relative Advantages and Disadvantages in Reputation, Resources, Sponsors, and Supporters

KSU/CCB continues to maintain a reputational disadvantage to our Research University competitors in our markets. KSU’s relative youth, location (“outside the perimeter” of Atlanta), and more modest undergraduate admissions selectivity result in its perception as a “lesser brand” in the market compared to Emory, GT, UGA, and GSU. However, we believe we have closed the gap significantly and possibly surpassed GSU, our primary competitor in a number of our offerings (particularly, the part-time MBA). In the *BloombergBusinessweek* 2013 Part-Time MBA Ranking, the Coles MBA ranked 22 in the U.S. and first in Georgia among public institutions (Emory (private) was 14, GSU 25). KSU/CCB also stands out in niche areas such as Family Business, Professional Sales, and Information Security, improving its reputational standing in its markets.

KSU/CCB receives less state support than its public Research University competitors. The “flagships” receive more state support than KSU and also have the infrastructure in place to better compete for grants from governmental and foundation entities. Finally, history, reputation, and name recognition/brand provide those institutions with inherent advantages in terms of sponsors and supporters (including corporations, foundations, and alumni). Therefore, KSU/CCB is more dependent on revenue-generating programs to close the resource gap.

C. Internal, Environmental, or Competitive Forces Challenging the School’s Future

Overall, the CCB’s future itself does not appear challenged, but a number of challenges exist that impede optimal execution of our mission:

- Limited Physical Facilities – At capacity in terms of faculty offices and classroom utilization
- State Funding and Faculty Compensation – As noted above, KSU is funded at a level significantly lower than its more research-intensive competitors. In addition, faculty recently received their first raise in five years, which is a concern as compression makes us vulnerable to loss of our top faculty to institutions with more resources.

-
-
- Branding – While we continue to make enormous strides in this area, it takes a long time to develop a quality brand image.
 - Consolidation - KSU’s consolidation with SPSU is a “double-edged” sword (see opportunities below). The main challenge will be incorporating a faculty with very limited research capabilities into one on a trajectory for higher quality research.

D. Opportunities Existing for Enhancing School’s Degree Offerings

In the past five years, CCB has introduced or “acquired” numerous degree and certificate programs including a research-intensive DBA, 2 undergraduate and 1 graduate Information Systems degrees (from KSU’s College of Science and Math) and a Music and Entertainment Business certificate (from KSU’s College of the Arts). Future opportunities include (as mentioned above):

- MS in Health Care Informatics
- Master’s program in Business for Liberal Arts undergraduates
- Master’s program in Business for Engineers (SPSU opportunity)
- MBA provided at firm location (e.g., GE Capital)

E. Degree Programs and Graduates

Degree Programs Included in Accreditation Review (with degrees awarded in FY 2013: Su 12, Fa 12, Sp 13 – latest available)

- BBA in Accounting (200)
- BBA in Economics (18)
- BBA in Finance (153)
- BS/BBA in Information Systems (93)
- BS/BBA in Information Security and Assurance (42)
- BBA in International Business (53)
- BBA in Management (245)
- BBA in Marketing (116)
- BBA in Professional Sales (33)
- MBA at KSU/Galleria, Dalton MBA, EMBA, Web MBA, FEMBA (207)
- Master of Accounting (59)
- MS in Information Systems (17)
- DBA (9)