KING SAUD UNIVERSITY'S STRATEGIC PLAN FORMULATION (KSU 2030)

Salem S. Alnasser Alqahtani

INTRODUCTION

King Saud University (KSU) has been a leading and distinguished institution of higher education in the Kingdom for over half of a century, continually contributing to the wealth and well-being of the nation. KSU has a fine tradition of exemplary learning and teaching, excellent research, and influential graduates. As KSU moves forward it must continue to strengthen its reputation and the impact it makes nationally and internationally. To achieve its long-term goal to become a world-class institution, KSU must demonstrate leadership and quality in all its activities, build on its past, and pursue even higher aspirations.

Recognizing that world-class universities have quality programs that educate the next generation of researchers, teachers, leaders, and professionals from all walks of life KSU will increase its emphasis on postgraduate research and coursework. New methods of teaching, including enhanced academic and non-academic programs that meet higher standards and are better managed will be developed to ensure quality assurance, academic coordination, and curriculum management. These new pedagogical methods will be supported by effective and extensive marketing and promotion as well as by state-of-the-art facilities. Moreover, KSU aims to design and develop coursework programs that are multi-disciplinary in focus and innovative in approach to respond to dynamic and challenging industry demands. Ultimately, the goal is to graduate well-qualified professionals who will lead and benefit contemporary society.

The university’s aspiration to become a research-intensive university requires immediate attention to the capacity of KSU's existing support infrastructure. KSU will re-engineer and streamline support activities across the university to align with its strategic goals.

It is increasingly clear that a university’s worth is judged by its value to society and its engagement with the community: as a stimulus to economic growth, as a provider of skilled graduates, as a generator of multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary research addressing real

social and economic needs, and as a source of expert advice. KSU acknowledges the multi-faceted impact that a university can make on individuals and on the society as a whole. The potential benefits of dynamic engagement are great, and if KSU is to be recognized in the future as a research-intensive university, engagement with the broader community – locally, nationally and internationally – will be essential.

Over the past two years, the university has been progressively shifting its activities to align more closely with community, national, and global priorities. KSU has entered into partnerships with major industrial sectors, and secured countless research grants addressing specific problems that have the potential to make a significant impact on industry and the community. New research chairs, research centers, and centers of excellence aligned to national priorities have been created in the areas of advanced technology, materials, advanced manufacturing, water, smart materials and structures, information security, polymers, and so on. This strengthened research focus will be extended further over the next ten years, into areas such as water desalination and resource management, healthcare, petrochemicals, and energy resources. All of these efforts and improvements will position KSU to obtain additional funds for reinvestment in scholarships, facilities, and staff recruitment and development.

BACKGROUND

KSU, like other Saudi universities, has played an important role in the higher education sector in the Kingdom since its inception in 1957. As the first university founded in Saudi Arabia and most recently, the first university to establish a private endowment program in the Kingdom, KSU aspires to be a beacon for higher educational institutions. For KSU to continue pioneering higher education it must become a viable research-based university capable of playing a pivotal role in Saudi Arabia's knowledge-based economy. This is not to say that KSU should shirk from its teaching role; rather, it must simultaneously deliver teaching and research excellence at both national and global standards.

Currently, KSU counts approximately 65,000 students, more than 7,400 faculty members, and more than 100 academic departments within 24 colleges. Initially, KSU was more teaching oriented, giving less priority to scientific research and outreach. In the last two decades, KSU's involvement in research has significantly increased. In fact, an institute for research and consultative work has been established whose basic function is to promote research collaboration with industry. In addition, a deanship of scientific research has been established that functions as the umbrella for the 27 research centers. The research budget has witnessed a constant increase. Moreover, the strategic partnership established between KSU and some of the leading companies in the Saudi industrial sector has further increased the financial support for scientific research and offered a new set of varied research topics. As a result, scientific research, outreach, and collaboration have started to gain more ground.

KSU has changed its mission in the past two years by prioritizing and giving utmost importance to research; it has developed partnerships with local industry and has established mutual partnerships with leading international academic institutions (Al Othman, 2009). According to its new vision, KSU seeks research excellence and international recognition (Al Qahtani, 2009). Moreover, KSU with its Saudi sister universities has been attempting to play

a pivotal role in the strategic orientation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia toward the establishment of a knowledge-based society. However, KSU has not compromised its teaching quality and is working hard to have all its academic programs accredited, with some already having secured full accreditation. Its quality improvement process also extends to its administrative functions, where ISO certifications have been granted to a number of its colleges and some of its top management departments. The target is to have KSU's entire administration ISO-certified.

This case will reflect on KSU's experience in its rapid and steady journey towards excellence. Section Two describes the overall framework of the strategic plan and KSU's philosophy of development. Section Three highlights the upgrade of KSU's infrastructure. An overview of the developmental programs at KSU is given in Section Four. The impacts of the improved infrastructure and developmental programs are given in Section Five and concluding remarks are given in Section Six (Al Othman, 2009).

The ambition to become a world-class university is set forth in KSU's strategic plan that will guide the University's development from 2010 to 2030. Over the past four years, KSU has made considerable progress toward this goal, and the new strategic plan will enable it to build on this progress. KSU's strategic plan expresses its willingness, desire, and commitment to stretch itself in its effort to continuously improve what it does as a responsible, responsive, and accountable university. KSU's quest to transform itself into a world-class university entails three main goals (Al Othman, 2009):

Goal 1: Enhancing Learning

Goal 2: Promoting Discovery

Goal 3: Enabling Engagement

KSU's new plan features the intersecting and integrative relationships involved in these overriding goals. In the following, both the individual characteristics of each goal and their intersecting and integrative relationships are illustrated, together with KSU's programs and initiatives to achieve them (King Saud university, 2009 (1)).

KSU 2030 QUICK WINS

To achieve its ambitious strategic goals, KSU needed to improve its infrastructure. In this regard, a large number of university strategic projects were founded. The generous fund allocated by the Saudi government to these projects amounted to 14 billion Saudi Riyals (3.8 *billion US dollars),* (King Saud University, 2008). These projects are:

- Female University City Project: This constitutes a radical solution to the continual suffering imposed by the remote and restricted current female university study sites, which are characterized by weak services, random distribution, and insufficient capacity to cope with the increasing number of female students.

- Medical City Project Expansion Finalization: This project seeks to finalize the expansion of the main University Hospital campus by creating a center for Heart Diseases and Intensive Care, as well as a Diabetes Center and a Family Care Center, and to expand the College of Medicine and the College of Dentistry with the most advanced medical equipment currently available.

- Faculty Members Housing Project: This project includes about 400 villas and 522 apartments in 12 buildings. In these housing facilities, modern comprehensive services in an attractive and healthy environment will be made available in accordance with international standards and conditions.

- College Buildings Expansion: This project aims to create a substantial number of additional college buildings capable of absorbing a larger number of students.

- University Endowment Project: Funded with the new endowment, the university has started to lay the foundation of the University Towers Project; when completed it will be the first endowed educational institution of its kind in the Kingdom, extending over 180,000 m^2.

- Riyadh Techno Valley (RTV) Project: This project aims to build a vast science park to serve as the Kingdom's portal to a contemporary, global, knowledge-based economy.

Administratively, KSU has established new offices to boost its performance and address new trends in education and management. Some of the newly established offices are (King Saud University, 2009 (3):

- Vice Rector for Knowledge Exchange and Technology Transfer (KETT): The mission of this office is to coordinate various university units to activate and build the knowledge culture across the community through novel developmental programs, regional and international collaboration, and technology transfer.

- Dean of Quality: The mission of this office is to simplify administrative and academic procedures, ensure continuous performance, evaluate and assure the quality of university administrative and academic units, and satisfy university objectives with respect to quality and academic accreditation issues.

- Dean of e-Transactions and Communications: The objective of this office is to keep KSU current with high-tech developments and to secure IT infrastructure. To date this has resulted in establishing automated administrative, financial, and academic procedures offering an integrated database unifying data and information sources for easy access and maximal benefit.

- Dean of Skills Development: The objectives of this office are to develop the skills of faculty, lecturers, teaching assistants, students, administrative personnel, and employees in a way that guarantees the achievement of excellence and high levels of creativity in their tasks.

- Dean of Electronic and e-Learning: The objectives of this office are to diversify and to improve ways of teaching and learning based on information technology and modern communications. One of the products of this office is the establishment of a large number of interactive smart classrooms throughout campus.

KSU'S DEVELOPMENTAL PROGRAMS

The developmental programs at KSU are considered unique in the region. These programs aim for a leap in excellence and innovation at both regional and international levels. They are grouped in five systems (see Figure 1): Student System, Partnership System, Scientific Research System, Innovation System, and Attraction System (Al Othman, 2009).

Student System

The university student is at the center of academic operations and developmental activities at KSU. Since the University aspires to establish its international leadership through social partnerships to build a knowledge-based community, this requires an effective student partnership. KSU's "Student Partnership System" focuses on building an effective partnership with students, through soft skills trainings such as self-development, commitment, responsibility, leadership skills, communication skills, IT, and innovation. In addition, the system would encourage and motivate students to actively participate in developmental programs, and resolve youth-related issues through research. The system also focuses on developing the concept of justice among students, encourages efforts to combat injustice and provides opportunities to participate in decision-making. Eventually, it is hoped that KSU's partnership with students would help to build a satisfied, harmonious university community based on the principles of justice and equality.

Partnership System

The purpose of the Partnership System is to transform the Saudi community into a knowledge -based and socially responsible community. This requires disseminating information that increases community awareness of the need to resolve contemporary community issues that pertain to the environment, health, social needs, and the economy. The system aims to collect USD 10 billion to accelerate KSU's research, leadership, developmental, and educational activities and to consolidate community. Furthermore, the system strives to build the community based on entrepreneurial thinking; to this end, KSU organized and held its First International Conference on Entrepreneurship on October 25, 2009.

KSU alumni are the best representatives of the university to the community. They can build the trust and leadership that will support strong partnerships. The system is directed toward creating a communications channel for the University's alumni through which they could exchange ideas and expertise as well as establish among themselves career relationships that will benefit from such a social partnership.

Scientific Research System

The Scientific Research System's purpose is to promote scientific research in all key and strategic areas. In this regard, King Abdullah Institute for Nanotechnology endeavors to adopt technology and to transfer it to the community, develop national competencies in nanotechnology research, and work towards consolidating nanotechnology-related activities at the university. The system aspires to achieve world-class excellence in scientific research and innovation. To achieve this excellence, KSU has established 123 research programs, 4 centers for research excellence, satellite labs around the world, and has signed over 60 international contracts with leading universities, institutes, and individuals.

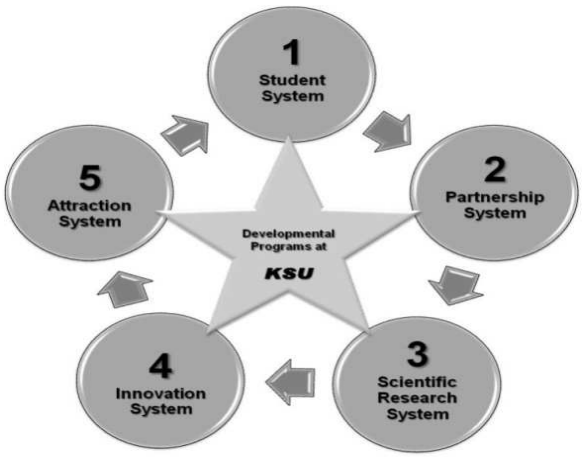
Innovation System

Innovation is one of the core values of KSU and is based on the strong belief that innovation can elevate the Saudi community intellectually, socially, economically, and most importantly, technologically. In this regard, KSU has initiated the establishment of a scientific oasis named Riyadh Techno Valley (RTV) to be a leading regional model for scientific pursuits. Several companies and local, regional, and international research centers employing about 3,000 researchers, 12,000 commercial experts, and offering 5,000 job opportunities to students, are expected to invest in the RTV. Leading partners include Stanford Research Institute, International Association of Science Parks (IASP), Barcelona Science Park, National Business Incubation Association (NBIA), Colorado Springs Technology Incubator, Plug & Play Incubator, Zamil Group – Oxford, and SABIC. In addition, KSU has founded an incubator and innovation center to encourage and create both an innovative environment and job opportunities. KSU assures support and protection for all affiliates through an intellectual property and licensing program.

Attraction System

The purpose of the Attraction System is to attract distinguished researchers, outstanding faculty, Nobel Laureates, and renowned scientists from across the world. Over the past two years, 358 faculty members and 155 researchers have been recruited world-wide (King Saud University, 2009 (5)).

FIGURE 1: CLASSIFICATION OF KSU'S DEVELOPMENTAL PROGRAMS



KSU'S MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES

Today, in an environment of over 34 public and private universities in the Kingdom, stakeholders articulate a sophisticated and ambitious vision for KSU; namely, to become a national and global model of teaching and research excellence. The majority of stakeholders believe that KSU must continue to pioneer higher education in the Kingdom and become the first research-based university, playing a pivotal role in Saudi's knowledge economy. This is not to say that KSU should shirk its teaching role; rather, that it must simultaneously deliver teaching and research excellence at both a national and global standard.

This aspirational goal is embodied in the following excerpts from KSU's mission and vision statements (www.ksu.edu.sa, 2014):

Mission: To provide a high caliber, rigorous education, produce creative research, serve society, and contribute to building the knowledge economy and community through continual learning, a creative thinking environment, the optimal use of technology, and effective international partnerships.

Vision 2030: 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 distinction 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 by upholding professionalism, responsibility, and innovation.
- Freedom of inquiry: Rigorous and honest intellectual exploration is fundamental to our academic traditions and 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 expressing our thinking and ideas for others to understand and evaluate, 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 to enhance continued intellectual growth and society's welfare.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The current strategic plan represents the culmination of the work of more than 4,000 members of the KSU community who have been active planning participants since the cycle commenced during the 2008-2009 academic year. Their creativity and dedication have resulted in the identification of the University's core values and the formulation of these

strategic objectives. The strategic objectives, indications of where the University needs to renew and expand its efforts, are grounded in KSU's mission, vision, and core values. As pointed out in the first part of this paper, there are 9 strategic objectives supported by 45 initiatives. These nine strategic objectives represent broad strokes pointing the University to the future. Due to the restriction on the length of the paper, the strategic objectives are highlighted together with the most relevant and important initiatives (recommendations) (King Saud University, 2009 (4)).

Strategic Objective 1: Good Everywhere; Great In Focus Areas

KSU offers a wide spectrum of disciplines and areas of study. The variety and comprehensiveness of its programs have historically been a source of strength. Unfortunately, with the exception of health and engineering, few disciplines have reached any level of national or international distinction. If KSU is to achieve its goal of becoming a leading global university, it needs to improve its performance across all disciplines, while simultaneously achieving distinction in an identified set of priority disciplines. While improvements across the board are necessary if KSU is to reach this goal, focusing on a small number of priority initiatives constitutes a manageable target.

KSU needs to focus its efforts on only a few priority disciplines for two reasons:

1. Given that the resources available to KSU are limited both in terms of people and management capabilities an initial focus on a small number of disciplines to drive transformation will not place undue strain on these resources.

2. Raising the quality of a limited set of disciplines can serve as a beacon to the rest of the institution, seeding an overall improvement in quality, and creating a virtuous circle of change and transformation.

A two-stage process was used to identify five high-potential priority areas for teaching and five for research. First, all the sectors of the Kingdom's economy were passed through a filter using the following criteria: a) the growth potential of the sectors in KSA, and b) global trends in higher education and what leading institutions are focusing on. This analysis was then validated through expert interviews and a literature search to highlight the unique needs of the Kingdom in teaching and research. This long list of sectors was then measured against three criteria: (i) current needs, (ii) talent and knowledge within the Kingdom, and (iii) the relative strengths and capabilities of KSU's program compared to other local players and in view of the next technological horizon.

This approach helped shortlist five priority areas for teaching: education, healthcare, ICT and engineering, finance and insurance, and management. In research, KSU will best address the current and future needs of the Kingdom by focusing on healthcare, education, water management, petrochemicals, and urban studies. Additionally, nanotechnology, where the Kingdom has already focused its resources, can become an area KSU continues developing in order to be a part of the next wave of technological innovation. KSU should, however, take a holistic look at emerging technologies when drawing up the plan to build its next round of technological innovation.

Attributes of King Saud University's Strategy

Any successful strategy for KSU for developing the priority areas outlined above will need to have the following attributes:

- A partnership model that includes other higher education institutions as well as private companies will enable the quick ramp-up of KSU capabilities to meet the highest international standards. The nature of these partnerships will vary for research and teaching.

- A group of high-caliber faculty who have wide global exposure and are committed to performing research at the highest level.

- Defining and measuring faculty outcomes against high international standards (teaching and research) will enable KSU institutions to reward excellence.

- A select group of students at the undergraduate level who are able to engage in a well-rounded experience that will prepare them for a successful career (in areas that constitute priorities for teaching) and a distinguished and international group of graduate students who are able to develop high-quality research work under faculty leadership.

- Defining and measuring student performance by dimensions such as employment targets, national and international achievement awards, and progression to international reputable institutions for graduate degrees.

- For each of these attributes and for each priority area a set of options exists. In order to select the most appropriate option, KSU should consider several criteria, namely (a) the ease of operational implementation, (b) social and political feasibility and (c) the level of impact on KSU's teaching and research excellence. The recommendation examples below highlight the development of areas of excellence in healthcare and education.

Recommendation 1.1: Develop areas of excellence – Healthcare

Given the very significant needs of the Kingdom, KSU has opportunities to make a meaningful contribution in healthcare on three major fronts:

1. Contributing to the expansion of healthcare provision in the Kingdom by training an increasing number of leading professionals and developing research on the expansion of healthcare systems.

2. Promoting the overall wellness of the Kingdom's inhabitants by gaining a better understanding of preventive care and lifestyle education and broader issues such as parent education to support the healthy development of children.

3. Conducting in-depth research on specific ailments of the KSA population, such as diabetes, obesity, infectious diseases, and traumas.

Figures 2 through 4 below describe the range of options that exists for KSU (King Saud University, 2009 (4)).

FIGURE 2: PARTNER OPTIONS FOR HEALTHCARE

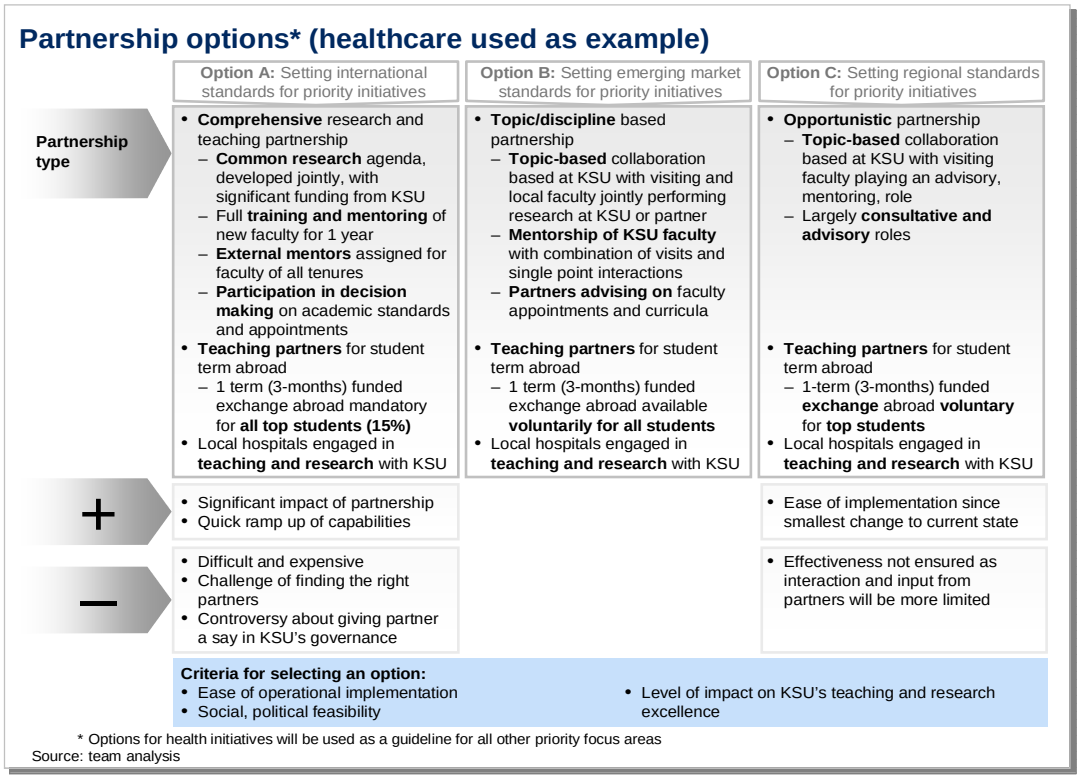


FIGURE 3: FACULTY CHARACTERISTICS AND OUTCOMES – HEALTHCARE

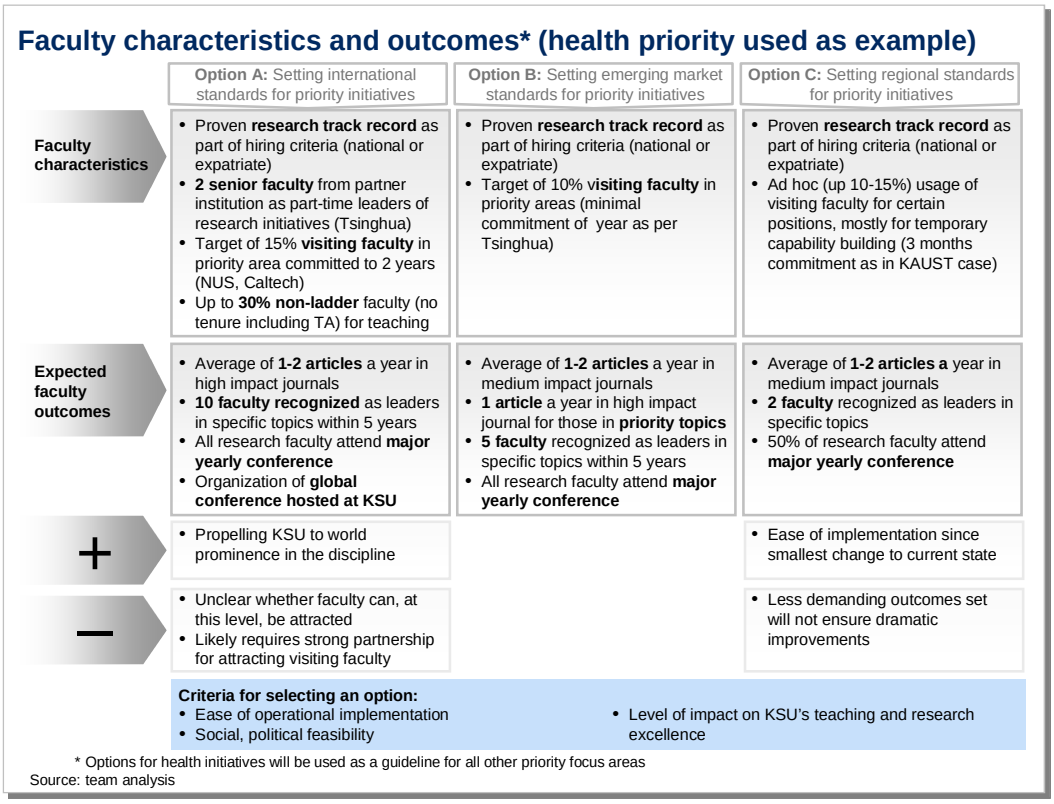
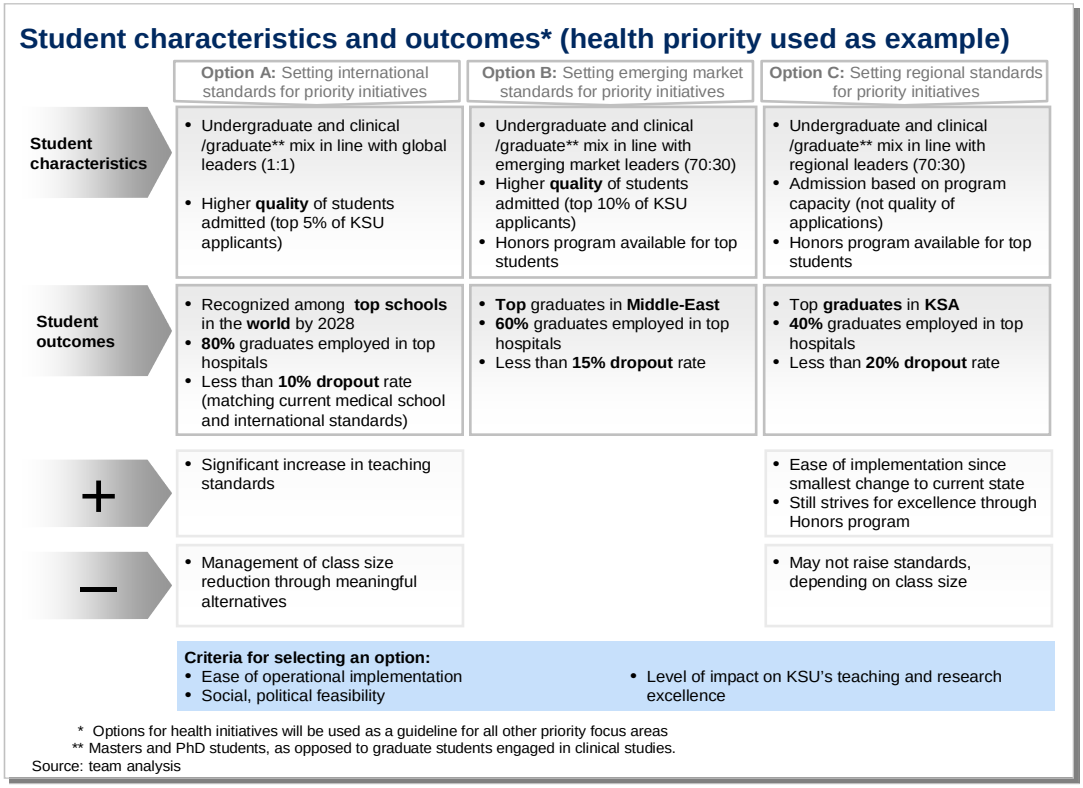


FIGURE 4: STUDENTS CHARACTERISTICS AND OUTCOMES – HEALTHCARE



Recommendation 1.2: Develop area of excellence – Education

Education constitutes one of the key challenges that the Saudi society will face over the next few years. KSU should aim to make a difference in society by significantly contributing to the development of education in the Kingdom.

It must strive to do that by adopting a twofold strategy:

Produce a small but highly capable cadre of classroom teachers, principals, and other education specialists to become leaders who will help to address the Kingdom's high demand for skilled teachers.

Contribute to developing a pedagogy specific to the needs of the Kingdom that will support education reform. KSU's 21st Century Education Centre would offer high quality training for teachers at all levels in relevant pedagogical research tailored to the Saudi context.

A proposal for how the program could be structured is outlined in Figure 5.

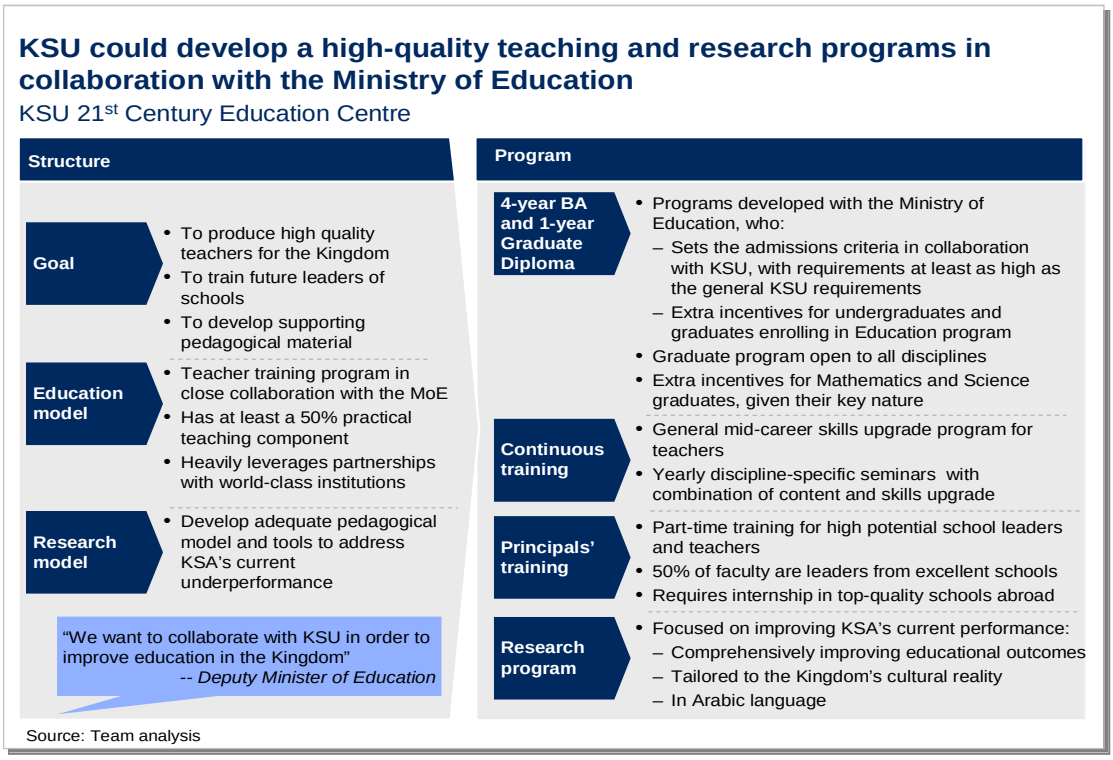
Strategic Objective 2: Distinctive Faculty

If KSU is to realize its goals, it must ensure that its faculty are of the highest caliber. All the leading, fast-progressing universities throughout the world have in common practices related to the recruitment, retention, and evaluation of their faculty.

Recommendation 2.1: Strengthen faculty recruitment process to match international standards.

- Recruit based on strategic needs;
- Thorough process to evaluate teaching and research credentials;
- Global recruitment process;
- Independent peer-review recruiting process;
- Follow-up of selected candidates by KSU senior faculty.

FIGURE 5: KSU'S 21ST CENTURY EDUCATION CENTRE



Recommendation 2.2: Actively build capacity and attract visiting professors in each department.

- Strategically recruit visiting professors and young international talent from other universities.
- Nurture the talent of KSU's entry-level assistant professors. This involves ensuring that they have extra time and funding dedicated to research as well adequate mentorship from more senior faculty and formal training in teaching.

Recommendation 2.3: Increase benefits and improve support and environment for faculty members.

Faculty members require that the environment in which they work and the duties they are expected to carry out are well thought through and in consonance with the general tenor of the university's goals. This helps them produce high-quality output in both teaching and research. To enable its faculty to perform at the highest level, a number of key initiatives ought to be taken to have an environment that fosters development. These include:

- Adequate compensation packages, including salary, housing allowance, medical plan, and relocation of their families;
- Sufficient research funding for faculty members as well as funding for support positions;
- Strong Ph.D. students to create high caliber research groups for faculty members and lend teaching support.

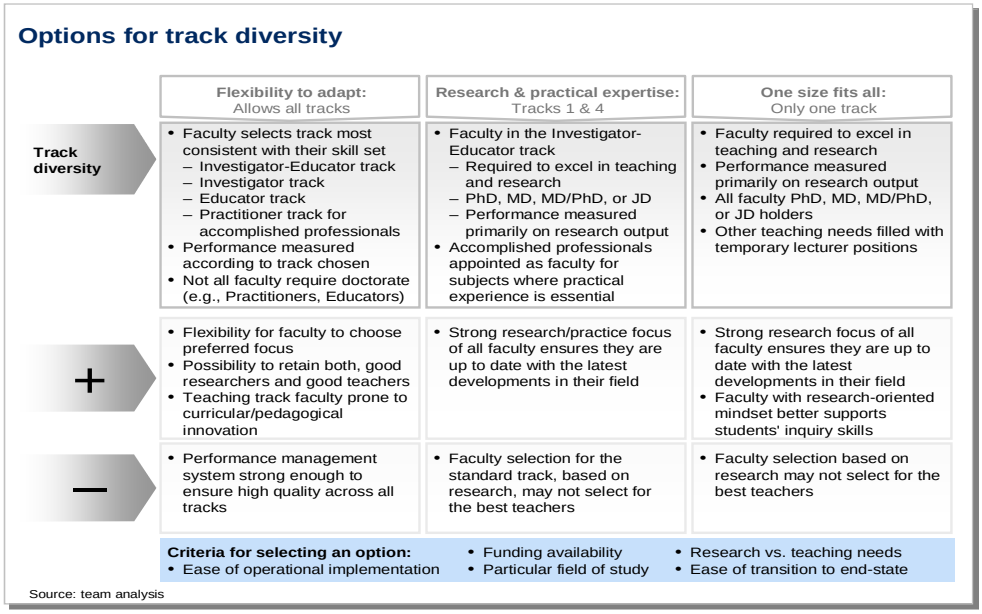
Recommendation 2.4: Design and deploy new faculty tracks.

Compulsory 'merit based tracks' must be designed for and offered to all newly hired faculty, Saudi or non-Saudi. Track models will vary from institution to institution, but the majority would fall under the following four types:

- Standard track at research universities – This track is most commonly found in top institutions. It consists of 30-50% of time spent teaching, based on the status of the professor and his tenure level, with the remaining time spent on research.
- Research only track – This track, found at university research centers, expects its faculty to spend 100% of their time doing research. In this model, teaching is voluntary although faculty are encouraged to be guest lecturers/speakers. Finally, their role as mentors is emphasized and their participation mentoring others is factored into their evaluation.
- Teacher only track – Up to 100% of faculty time is spent teaching in this track. The requirements regarding teaching method and curricula development vary according to academic status.
- Practitioner track – This model is a flexible model where faculty who have an industrial or clinical focus spend 20-30% of their time teaching. Extensive industry or clinical experience is required to warrant this position. The remainder of the time is spent on professional activities. This model is particularly popular in medical and business schools, where teachers share their time between industry/hospital and the classroom.

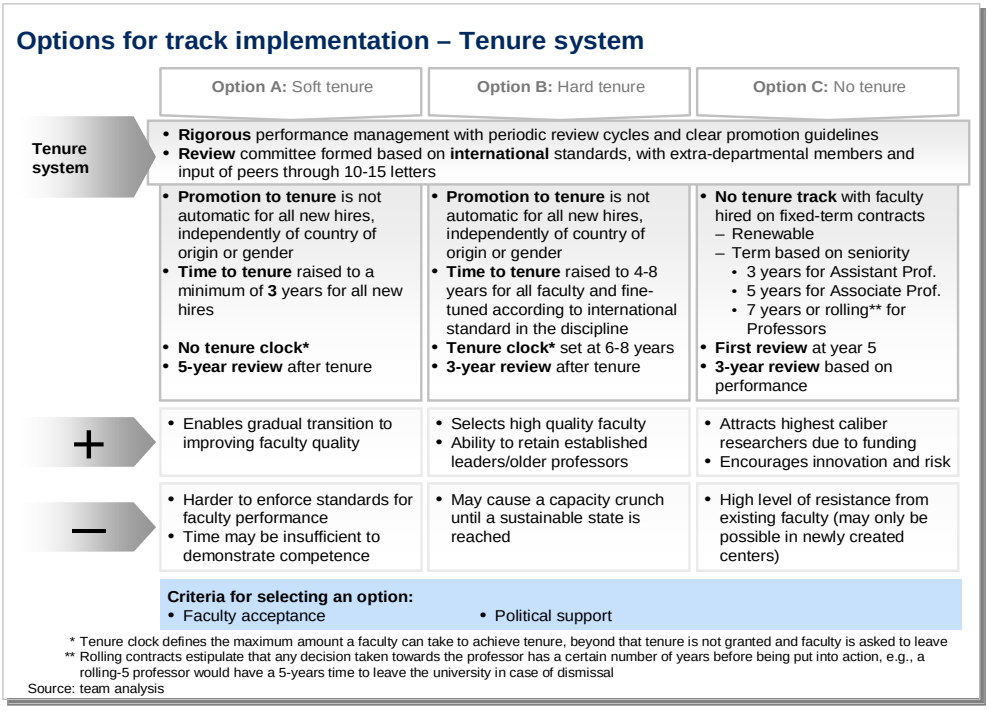
KSU has designed options that follow each of these four models. The majority of top institutions rely primarily on the standard research track, with a few schools leveraging practical experiences through guest lecturers or practitioners. These design options each have pros and cons, summarized in Figures 6 and 7, (King Saud University, 2009 (4)).

FIGURE 6: OPTIONS FOR TRACK DIVERSITY



Evidently, the new track will also need to have benefits; additional support, funding, and PhD students who will provide support and allow the faculty to reach the highest expected levels of performance.

FIGURE 7: OPTIONS FOR TRACK IMPLEMENTATION



Strategic Objective 3: Less is more

The size of a university affects it in a various ways. It can determine the level of "community" feeling within the institution. Depending on the ratio of available resources and funding to overall size, it can drive the ability to deliver appropriate education levels and quality research. For example, the faculty-student ratio is often cited as a rough measure of the teaching quality that will or will not be available to students. Graduate to undergraduate ratios are roughly indicative of the amount of research a university conducts. The size of KSU, currently more than 110,000 students (predominantly undergraduate), is striking by any comparison and was cited by all stakeholder groups as a potential challenge.

KSU should reduce its overall student enrollment. This should be done with care given the social implications of excluding students from the KSU community, but ultimately it will serve the university, the students, and the Kingdom well. Several recommendations to both reduce the size and manage the resulting outflow of students in Riyadh and the Kingdom are presented below.

Recommendation 3.1: Transform the existing branch campuses into stand-alone universities.

KSU has expanded significantly in a number of locations over the last 10 years, encompassing more than 18 geographically dispersed campuses within the Riyadh Province. In an effort to reduce the size of KSU and to increase the university's strategic focus, there is currently a proposal to transform KSU's non-Riyadh branches into three stand-alone universities grouped by geographic location. This initiative would bring down KSU enrollment to the range of 60,000-70,000 students. The three branches are: Shaqra University (~18,000 students); Al Kharj University (~18,000 students); and Al Majma'ah University (~11,000 students). See Figure 8.

Recommendation 3.2: Reduce the size of the student body at the Riyadh campuses by increasing student selectivity.

Even if the branch campuses are transformed into stand-alone universities, the student body at the remaining Riyadh campuses would still exceed 60,000, larger than that of any university ranked among the top 80 universities in The Times Higher Education World University Rankings, Therefore, a further reduction in the number of students is warranted to keep pace with the study body size at other leading world universities; this could be accomplished by setting higher standards for admission to the Riyadh campuses.

FIGURE 8: OPTIONS AROUND KSU'S STUDENT BODY SIZE

Options exist around KSU's student body size, with implication on the higher education system in the Kingdom

	Option A: Globally leading research university	**Option B:** Emerging market research university	**Option C:** Locally leading comprehensive university
Size of university	• **10-20 thousand** total (undergraduate and graduate) student body (benchmarked after MIT, Stanford, Cambridge, Oxford) • Implies a reduction of 40-50 thousand in student body • Current Muzahmiya campus plan does not support the large influx and thus **only achievable if additional public and/or private higher education capacity** is built within the Kingdom to capture non-admitted students	• **30-35 thousand** total student body (benchmarked after NUS, Tsinghua, and USC) • Implies a reduction of 30-35 thousand students • Current Muzahmiya campus plan does not support the large influx and thus **only achievable if additional public and/or private higher education capacity** is built within the Kingdom to capture non-admitted students	• **40-45 thousand** total student body • Implies a reduction of 15-20 thousand students and could potentially be achieved through **Muzahmiya campus**, which is planned to capture 10-15 thousand students
+	• Strong focus on depth areas possible • Good student to faculty ratio		• Ease of implementation since smallest change to current state
−	• High number of students for which alternative educational facilities need to be provided		• Still exceeding the size of 78 out of the 80 top universities in the world

Criteria for selecting an option:
- Degree of desired focus
- Ease of operational implementation, especially for increasing capacity
- Political feasibility
- Level of impact on KSU's teaching and research excellence

Source: interviews; team analysis

FIGURE 9: OPTIONS ON HOW KSU ADDRESSES THE INCOMING QUALITY OF ITS STUDENTS

Options exists around how KSU can address the incoming quality of its students

	Option A	Option B	Option C
Selectivity	• Combination of **Qiyas, Thanawiya, Tahseely, interviews and placement exam** based on each specific school needs and requirements • Exact combination of each admission criteria to be determined by each college, but should be heavily weighted towards more discerning Qiyas scores		
Student body characteristic	• Raise the current admission bar as to only take **top 20%** of current admits (Qiyas* of 81 equivalent)	• Raise the current admission bar as to only take **top 35%** of current admits (Qiyas* of 76 equivalent)	• Raise the current admission bar as to only take **top 50%** of current admits (Qiyas* of 73 equivalent)
Student incentives	• **Double student incentives**** to attract students in priority colleges by **raising new funds and giving scholarships**	• **Double student incentives***** to attract students in priority colleges by **reducing incentives in other colleges**	• **No changes** to current student incentives
+	• High student quality • High motivation for students		• Students of high potential but not great performers in high school still admitted
−	• Early rejection of a minority of high potential students who may not have performed well		• Highest quality of pool not ensured

Criteria for selecting an option:
- Degree of desired focus on research
- Ease of implementation over the next 20 years

* We use Qiyas to calibrate to, rather than the Thanawiyah because the Thanawiyah scores of KSU admits are largely skewed to higher grades, showing little variability and are not indicative of student performance; whereas the Qiyas scores are more normally distributed and relatively more correlated with student performance

** Priority college students would receive 1800 SAR monthly; while others would receive 900 SAR (as today)

*** Priority college students would receive 1800 SAR monthly; while others would receive 450 SAR

Source: team analysis; KSU student data

Recommendation 3.3: Expand current graduate offerings in each program and increase international graduate student admissions

Reducing student admissions at KSU will impact the overall education landscape in the Kingdom. It will allow KSU to increase its focus on graduate programs, provide faculty with the adequate leverage to do quality research, and support faculty teaching activities. This element is especially crucial in a context where KSU needs to overhaul its teaching methods.

Strategic Objective 4: Stronger Graduates

A prerequisite for developing high quality graduates is high quality freshmen. In the long-term, reducing the number of students through a higher bar for admission will address some of the current deficiencies in our graduates' skill set. Speaking a global language allows students to better adapt to a global job market, as well as an increasingly globalizing graduate studies market in terms of hard, soft, and language skills. Specifically, mastery of a global language expands opportunities for students to attend exchange programs at the universities of their choice and enables foreign faculty to teach at KSU, thereby increasing the global reach and prestige of the institution and allowing the university to attract foreign talent.

In order for KSU to be a competitive university, it will need to become more selective in its admissions criteria and reduce the number of students it admits annually as defined in the previous strategic objective. It will also need to complement these initiatives by strengthening the current student course offerings in order to better address the needs of its stakeholders.

Recommendation 4.1: Differentiate and strengthen the preparatory year between three broad academic areas to increase its impact.

Recommendation 4.2: Embed innovative teaching methods throughout KSU programs (e.g., case studies, problem-based and cooperative-collaborative learning, student presentations, and classroom technology).

Recommendation 4.3: Launch a Teacher's Academy to support and develop faculty skills.

Raising the soft and hard skills of our graduates will require a concerted effort from all members of the teaching group. A culture of continuous improvement, supported by a Teacher's Academy for new and existing faculty, will ensure that the latest teaching methods are being used.

Recommendation 4.4: Raise English language skill requirements for graduation.

To ensure quality graduates, students would be required to demonstrate skills in all main English language components; namely, speaking, writing, listening, and reading comprehension. IELTS and TOEFL provide the best and most reputable international criteria. Students are supposed to achieve at least 6.0 Bands in IELTS or a 550 score in TOEFL.

Strategic Objective 5: Building Bridges

Most leading universities, including public institutions, establish connections with external parties. This includes advisors from influential businesses, academic leaders, and alumni.

Recommendation 5.1: Create an office and a strategy for external relations:

- KSU should establish key partnerships with higher education institutional peers in all departments, especially in priority areas, to improve short term faculty capacity or capability deficiencies at KSU, offer international exchange programs for graduate and undergraduate students, provide visiting professorships for new and senior KSU faculty, and collaborate on joint research projects. Currently, KSU has started to develop twinning programs – but the effort is still in its early stages; informal collaborations exist with approximately 30 institutions. The goal would be to develop robust relationships that are integrated into a holistic program with clear and complementary objectives across relationships and structured performance management.

Recommendation 5.2: Engage KSU fully with Saudi society through the establishment of a community outreach program.

KSU should provide a program that ensures that both students and faculty engage with and make a meaningful contributions to the Saudi community. Among other positive effects, this would enable students to understand how they can function as active citizens who are aware of their surroundings.

In order to ensure a systematic effort, this program would involve a two-month summer community service requirement during the course of their studies, as well as a commitment to participate regularly in community activities while pursuing their degrees. In a similar vein, all faculty would also have an obligation to reach out to the Saudi community beyond the university walls. They would make a commitment to dedicate two full days a year to these activities, which could take a variety of forms. For example, lecturing in schools, mentoring school teachers, contributing specialized knowledge to local communities, and so on. While each faculty member's contribution itself would not need to be evaluated, it would have some input in final faculty evaluation reports.

Recommendation 5.3: Provide competitive grants to foster interdisciplinary research and programs.

As part of fostering interdisciplinary interactions, KSU should complement its focus areas (Strategic objective #1) with a more bottoms-up approach. This recommendation focuses on two dimensions:

1. Provide a central fund for interdisciplinary research that requires at least three separate departments to come together and propose an area of applied research that is relevant for KSU or KSA. Faculty should also be encouraged to find additional

funding in the private or public sector to supplement these funds and to demonstrate the market relevance of their research.

2. Create a KSU Global Leadership in Research series to promote monthly presentations by faculty and graduate students to the KSU community. The series should periodically present areas of success in interdisciplinary research and serve as a platform to showcase achievements and stimulate innovation.

Strategic Objective 6: Supportive Learning Environment

KSU should consider first, the internal environment of the university, which includes both the physical infrastructure, the quality of the relationships between members of the academic community, and the activities that make this a vibrant community; secondly, the level of engagement of KSU with the rest of the Saudi community and the contribution that it is making towards its development.

Recommendation 6.1: Launch campus infrastructure review and upgrade.

Upgrading and developing the campus infrastructure constitutes a necessary condition for the development of the university. Student and faculty surveys identify the most urgent needs as:

- The improvement of the quality and equipment of the lecture rooms in a way that is prepared to accommodate high quality teaching and facilitate the interaction of students. This is particularly acute in the ladies' campus, as high quality technological equipment is required for adequate interaction with male teachers.

- The development of libraries and communal areas, such as cafeterias, social and study areas in terms of furniture, IT equipment, and general maintenance levels. These physical improvements would enable independent work and collaboration, which is necessary to meet KSU's goal of becoming a great learning university with a vibrant community of students.

- With the 20-year horizon in mind, KSU should ensure the appropriate use of technology. This includes online availability of course curriculum/offering descriptions, lecture transcripts, and the use of online communication for student interaction with instructors and peers. Increasingly, university environments and infrastructures include both the physical and virtual.

Strategic Objective 7: Sustainable Future

Recommendation 7.1: Diversify sources of funding by cultivating target donor relationships.

Diversifying KSU's sources of funding has several advantages. First, it can translate into a larger pool of resources overall. Second, by receiving private funds in addition to the government allocation, KSU has a stronger rationale for the increased flexibility it seeks in governing itself. Specifically, KSU will be able to internally allocate a portion of its funds

independent of government institutions. Among these allocations are an endowment fund that can ensure long term sustainability through a continuous income stream. Sustainability and flexibility will enable the university to engage in activities that are better aligned with market demand, which should have a positive impact on teaching and research. An endowment can also provide KSU with a sustainable stream of funds for financing its operations and special projects. Our recommendation is that KSU continue to build upon this.

Since the amount of funding needed depends on the options chosen from the previous recommendations, we do not discuss the exact size of the fund in this section. We focus on the set-up and management of the fund instead. Overall, there are no other options since building an endowment is essential for KSU; the steps currently taken and the success of its pledges are steps in the right direction. Diversifying sources of funding, either for the endowment or for direct funding of initiatives, will require an active set-up and a strategy tailored to each donor group. Initially, KSU will need to create a potential donor list (students, alumni, high net worth individuals, corporations) and establish a relationship plan for each major donor group, highlighting their funding preferences. Generally, major donors require active personal cultivation, with a high-touch approach; whereas new alumni and students prefer a broader approach led by their peers. Universities worldwide leverage new alumni to reach out their class and ask student government and representatives to encourage giving to a cause that is dear to them. Loyalty to a school has to be harnessed early. Involving current students in fundraising, however small, is crucial. Once the target group and plan are completed, KSU will need to execute on their donor outreach plan and share KSU's vision with students, providing opportunities for students to contribute (e.g., with part of their monthly stipend).

Recommendation 7.2: Build an organization to support all fundraising activities within KSU.

KSU should create a single development office responsible for fundraising to ensure alignment across its different fundraising activities. It should be created at the Vice Rector level and is useful for the purpose of focusing and coordinating fundraising efforts.

To oversee their endowments, universities worldwide have created independent financial management companies where the universities have no say in asset management beyond the setting up of the structure and policy guidelines. These management entities usually consult with the university regarding long term goals and the overall investment risk, but have a high profile investment board making the financial decisions.

Strategic Objective 8: Greater Flexibility; Greater Accountability

In order to drive significant change through its bold strategic vision, KSU will need 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 its current status quo processes and systems. This is difficult to do given the current governance model. As a public university, KSU receives its funding from the government and is therefore subject to external control and influence on strategic and operational decisions. This leads to inefficiencies in its internal decision-making and constrains its ability to make significant changes. At the same

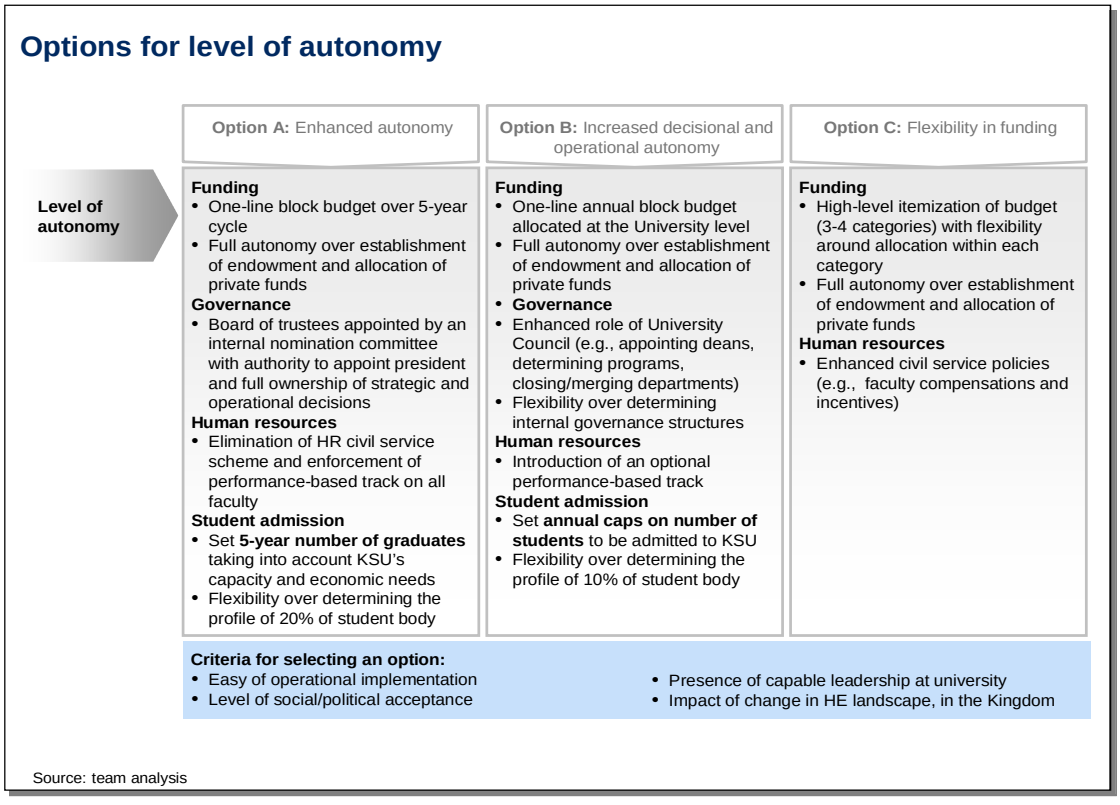
time, given its public status, KSU needs to maintain a relationship with the government and meet its obligations. Public universities around the world have recognized this challenge. They have generally dealt with it by developing a "performance contract" whereby they get an increased degree of operational freedom or autonomy and in return are held accountable to the government for delivering on certain performance dimensions.

Recommendation 8.1: Develop a performance agreement with the government

With respect to strategic flexibility, a performance agreement with the government will allow KSU's stakeholders (i.e., senior leadership, administrators, faculty, and students) to take greater ownership in decision-making and setting the university's direction. Greater ownership will potentially foster a more entrepreneurial and innovative culture that will better position KSU to compete in the global higher education arena.

In terms of operational flexibility, lifting operational regulations will help KSU adopt global best practices in areas such as human resources, performance management, and procurement and will allow for greater freedom in managing the financial resources of the university. For the 'level of autonomy', several options exist as shown in Figure 10.

FIGURE 10: OPTIONS FOR LEVEL OF AUTONOMY

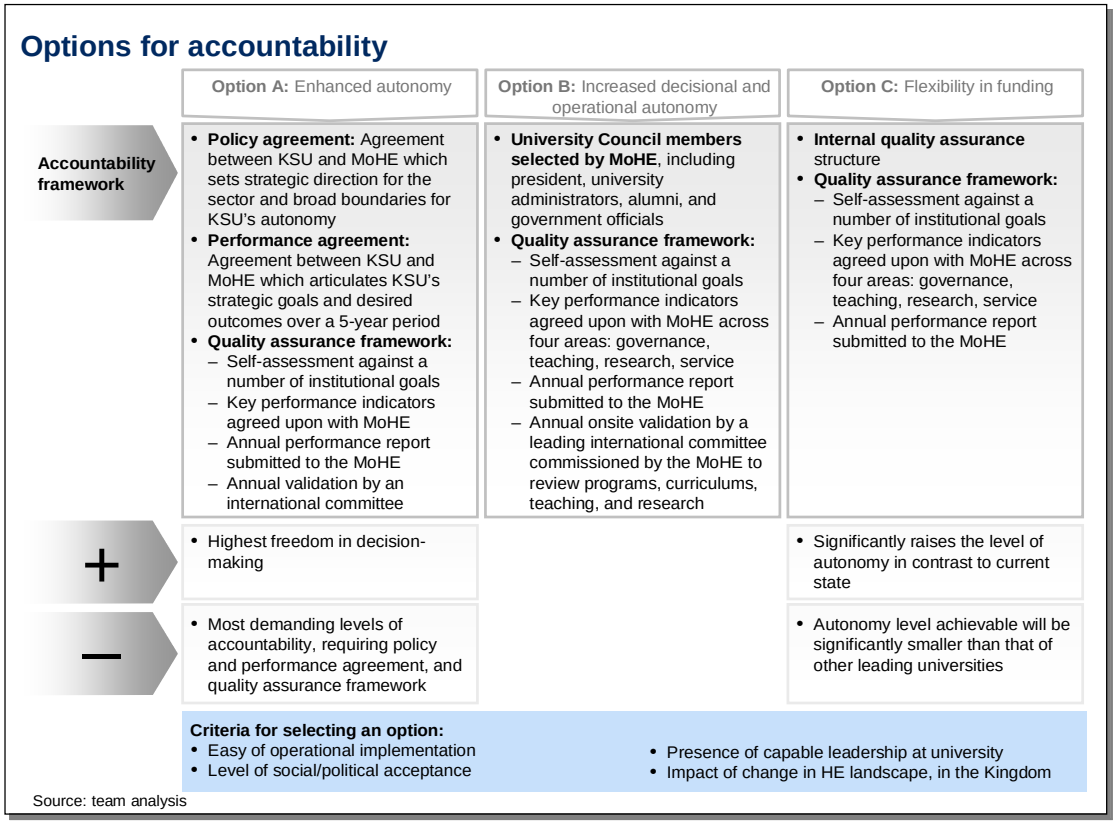


As greater autonomy is granted to KSU, the government will need to enhance accountability to ensure that government funding is well utilized to meet the country's objectives while simultaneously providing KSU with the flexibility to achieve global excellence. It is recommended that KSU negotiate for greater flexibility with regard to operational and

strategic decisions while working with the Ministry of Higher Education to craft a clear accountability framework in return for lifting direct regulations.

Overall, the choice of options for the 'level of autonomy' and the accountability framework should correspond to each other in the sense that a higher degree of autonomy also requires a higher degree of accountability and vice versa. With respect to the corresponding 'accountability framework', there are also three options, as shown in Figure 11.

FIGURE 11: OPTIONS FOR ACCOUNTABILITY



Strategic Objective 9: Organizing for Purpose

As KSU embarks on its journey towards becoming a global 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.

Recommendation 9.1: Consolidate complementary colleges into single faculties.

KSU could realize benefits similar to those of other universities and resolve many issues related to fragmentation of structures by combining colleges under larger faculties. When organizing colleges under larger faculties, KSU should optimize its structure to align with the following four factors: (i) Global trends in faculties/school organization; (ii) Supporting and advancing KSU's priority teaching and research areas; (iii) Encouraging interdisciplinary

collaboration among relevant disciplines; and (iv) Maximizing efficiency and ensuring practicality in using the university's resources.

However, as this is a most sensitive issue for KSU, the answer suitable to KSU's needs will depend on its feasibility for KSU's internal functioning. Bearing that in mind, a proposal that would optimize the four factors is a structure that involves six faculties, as follows:

- *Faculty of Arts & Humanities*: Arts, Languages & Translation, Arabic Language Institute, Tourism and Archaeology;
- *Faculty of Education*: Education, Teachers' College, Physical Education and Sports;
- *Faculty of Business and Law*: Business Administration, Law and Political Science;
- *Faculty of Engineering and ICT*: Engineering, Architecture and Planning, Computer and Information Science;
- *Faculty of Science:* Biological Sciences, Physical Sciences;
- *Faculty of Health Sciences:* Medicine, Dentistry, Pharmacy, Applied Medical Science, Nursing.

Recommendation 9.2: Reduce number of Vice-Rectors and Deans.

KSU's senior management structure should be reconsidered to ensure greater focus, more clarity around roles and responsibilities, and increased accountability. In addition, senior leadership positions should be dedicated to overseeing core functions (e.g., Academic Affairs, Administrative Affairs, Legal Affairs, etc.) and driving strategic priorities, such as promoting research excellence and graduate studies.

In designing an optimal organizational structure for KSU, five factors should be considered: (i) Small number of professional administrators at the senior levels: 7-10 direct reports to the rector and few administrators at the N-2 level; (ii) Clear decision rights and accountability; (iii) Clear roles and responsibilities; (iv) Dedicated leadership to drive strategic priorities (e.g., Vice Rectors for Research and a Vice Rector for Female Equity); and (v) Senior leadership positions for core functions (e.g., Vice Rectors for Endowment and Academic Affairs). Were Academic Affairs to take these factors into consideration, a streamlined organization would optimally have 7 strategic direct reports and 20 reports at the N-2 level.

Recommendation 9.3: Raise the quality of administrative support staff.

The quality of the staff directly impacts the performance of KSU. As in any organization, staff must be treated fairly and be presented with a clear career path. Four principles should govern the way that support staff are treated at KSU:

- Improve the hiring process for staff: A decentralized hiring process that allows flexible matching of requirements to people should be in place, with faculty ultimately deciding what support staff they want on their teams. Leverage contract-based staffing so that the contracts of non-performing staff can be discontinued.

- Implement world-standard professional development for staff: KSU should put in place individual development plans for each staff member and a comprehensive feedback framework. Preferential access should be given to job openings across the University. Staff should be supported to continue learning and improvement by making internal courses available and by financing relevant external courses.

- Develop a rigorous performance management system: Implement higher merit-based salary increases to excellent staff performers and discontinue the contracts of non-performing staff. Reward outstanding performance through staff recognition programs.

- Ensure that an environment of equal opportunities is in place: Ensure that staff are treated fairly and equally regardless of nationality, race, and gender through the implementation of adequate policy and the creation of an ombudsperson for staff.

CONCLUSION

KSU has made great progress in recent years, but much work remains to be done. The greatest challenge is the mobilization of all university affiliates (students, faculty, staff, and alumni) to achieve excellence. Mobilizing for excellence will require connecting the disconnected parts of the university to highlight its individual expertise across the colleges, to share increasing levels of knowledge about the university, and to share in transparent decision-making so as to become agile, interactive, and receptive to new ideas and initiatives. KSU will extend this connectivity outside of the university to its interactions with the community, the nation, and the world.

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Salem S. Alnasser Alqahtani, Ph.D., is a Professor of Public Administration. He completed his Ph.D. at the University of Pittsburgh, majoring in public administration, and specializing in human resources and new trends in public administration. His expertise is in the areas of strategic planning and the development and transformation of public organizations. He has published three books and more than forty articles in peer-reviewed journals. He has served as Dean of Development at King Saud University for four years and as a supervisor of its Strategic Plan for six years.

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