

**Kansas Wesleyan University  
State of the University Address**

**By**

**Dr. Fletcher M. Lamkin, President & CEO**

**Sams Chapel**

**January 27, 2012**

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome! It is wonderful to be with you as we celebrate Kansas Wesleyan University's accomplishments and look forward to our future.

My intention, today, is to report on the state of the University – and the state of Kansas Wesleyan University is strong. With stable finances, a balanced budget, growing enrollments, a host of new initiatives, better connection to our community, and a strong commitment to the future, our university is clearly on a path toward our goal of becoming the best private university in Central Kansas.

Let's begin today's address with a few highlights of recent accomplishments by our students, faculty, and staff:

The top priority in the University's strategic plan – our first "Stone," if you will -- is to develop strong, innovative academics and instruction. I am pleased to acknowledge some recent academic achievements that are taking us toward this goal.

- The Nursing department, thanks to a near \$82K grant from Salina Regional Health Center, was able to purchase METI-MAN, a high fidelity simulator that will allow multiple learning objectives to be taught to nursing students in a realistic clinical environment.
- Sport & Exercise Science department was able to purchase a Monark Peak Ergometer, laptop, and computer stand – thanks in part to a generous donation. This will help the department become a state-of-the-art facility and attract more students.
- The Student Success Center is now open and has already been a huge bonus for students. Jennifer Unger is the SSC director.
- Dr. Jamie Spikes went to Australia as part of the second study of the Lutheran Parish Nurses International. She was the author of the Devotion for December 2011 that appeared on the World Wide Web for Lutheran Parish Nurses International.
- In April, we will present lectures, videos, and discussions for Holocaust Week, an event coordinated by Professor Mike Russell of the History Department.
- Steve Hoekstra was recently featured in an online article on [www.livescience.com](http://www.livescience.com) entitled: *Dreams Do Discriminate: Racial Makeup Mimics Real Life.*
- Dr. Philip S. Meckley will be presenting at the American Academy of Religion Rocky Mountains/Great Plains meeting, March 2012, Provo Utah, on the topic of "'Tomorrow Never Knows:' The Tibetan Book of the Dead and the Scordatura of American Vajrayana Buddhism."
- Finally, the Provost has submitted a budget request for the Center for Teaching Excellence. While not yet officially approved on next year's budget, I will assure you

today that, barring unforeseen circumstances, this budget request will be approved and that the Center will be operational next academic year.

These achievements are notable successes in our academic program, and we are pleased to celebrate them as we pursue our First Stone.

Second among the “Five Stones” is to place a clear focus on students, with high expectations. At Kansas Wesleyan, we strive for a seamless experience where academic studies and co-curricular activities all contribute to a student’s intellectual and character development. Thus, the achievement of this “stone” takes place not only in the classroom, but also in our activities. KWU students represent our university in many venues, most notably the Fine Arts, athletics, and academics. And we have wonderful achievements on which to report.

- Within the Fine Arts...
  - Debate and Forensics continues to excel and compete at a high level all over the country. They will participate in the *Border Wars* tournament in February on our campus
  - Fine Arts has had a very busy fall season, featuring concerts, plays, opera, and the annual celebration of Christmas by Candlelight. They will continue to be very busy in the coming months with many wonderful upcoming events – including the winter play, *Crimes of the Heart*, and a partnership with Salina Community Theatre in February on the production of *Fences* – starring KWU graduate and TV and film actor Jernard Burks. Spring will also feature band concerts, choir performances, gallery exhibitions, and the spring musical, *Avenue Q*.
  - Finally, Peggy Orenstein, a national best-selling author, will be on campus for a book signing, lectures, and panel discussions regarding her work on “Media (Re)lections: Body Image, Self-Esteem, and Mass Communication.” This will take place January 30-February 1 and is co-sponsored by the Girl Scouts of Kansas Heartland.
  
- In Athletics, our scholar-athletes are achieving excellence both in their athletic competition and in the classroom. For example:
- The KWU volleyball team won the KCAC conference championship with a 17-1 record, won the conference tournament and became the first KWU team to advance to the national tournament and the first KCAC team to advance past the opening round of nationals. Individual achievements by our players included two first-team All-West Central Region and one honorable mention all American. Coach Fred Aubuchon was selected as KCAC coach of the year and AVCA regional coach of the year. Beyond all this, five of our team members were recognized as NAIA scholar athletes...second best among the 24 teams in the national tournament.
- Men’s and Women’s Soccer together received numerous honors, including 12 first-team all-KCAC, eight all-region, and five NAIA scholar-athletes. In addition, Hanna Kern was selected as academic all-district all-American and Coach Mike Dibbini was KCAC coach of the year as he posted his 100<sup>th</sup> win in men’s and women’s soccer.
  
- Pursuing the “stone” of placing the focus on students begins with how we as a community address and approach them. When prospective students visit our campus, they need to

understand the commitment we have to their future. While these young men and women often have a sport or activity foremost in their mind, they need to understand that the most important part of their development is their successful attainment of a degree, which requires academic success. Thus, it is important that, while most prospective students are focusing on a sport or activity, they must be engaged early on by a caring and concerned faculty that is encouraging their academic success. I want cite a wonderful example of something we CAN do to engage these students. It's a letter from Frank Roth to a prospective student (whom we will call "Joe") who recently visited our campus:

*Dear Joe,*

*THANKS for visiting KWU the other day, it was nice to meet you. I trust you made it home safely as you had a ways to go.*

*I really do hope you had a good time during your visit and that you learned a lot about what we have to offer. As I mentioned, we are a great place to get an education (we have a very, very good Business Department) and to play basketball if we are right for you and you for us. I also hope you were able to answer the "can do", "will do", and "fit in" questions while you were here, and that you now know if we are right for each other - and I hope we are.*

*Joe, I hope you will decide on KWU as I would like to see you on our campus in the Fall, but no matter what you decide ALWAYS REMEMBER to have fun, to do well, and to give back as you journey through life. Also, please let me know if I can be of any further assistance as you search for a university as I am here to help you succeed no matter where you attend school.*

*Frank*

In this brief letter, Frank has demonstrated sense of community and a seamless, personal approach to higher education. He has sent a clear message to Joe that we will be committed to his success, and that KWU is a great opportunity for him. Thanks, Frank, for this wonderful example.

Our university prides itself in being a campus that cares as we strive toward the third "Stone": achieving a culture rooted in trust, caring, communication, and respect.

- Improving our culture does not require a major commitment of resources. It requires a commitment to civility on campus...making positive connections among ourselves, our students, to our external constituencies, and to our visitors. It requires most simply a concerted effort to live up to our university's Christian values, and to work together in a manner that advocates and develops respect, competence, and trustworthiness.
- Essential to achieving this is how we treat one another, particularly when we are in a position of power or authority. Good examples abound, but there are also examples where

we do not live up to expectations. To gather more information concerning both the good and the not-so-good, we will be introducing the use of feedback forms for many of the offices on campus. These forms may be completed by students, staff, faculty, or visitors to our campus to identify exceptionally good interactions or service, as well as to identify weaknesses and areas needing improvement. The forms will be returned directly to the President's Office, and the information compiled for reports to staff, faculty, and the Board of Trustees.

- We see examples of good interactions on a daily basis at KWU, but I want to share one instance in particular because it exemplifies the spirit and culture of a campus that cares.
- Recently, a student returning for the Spring Semester found herself in a seemingly hopeless situation, as a combination of personal issues, parental problems, and financial difficulties had simply overwhelmed her. She was at a crossroads in her life and needed help. When the student asked to meet with me, I invited Michelle Jensen to join us in the hope that Michelle's knowledge, experience, and competence in dealing with financial aid issues would be helpful. What I observed as the three of us met in my office was a combination of caring, compassion, competence, and understanding as Michelle calmly and rationally talked the student through the options available and the decisions she would have to make. In 30 minutes of counseling, Michelle created hope where there had been none, and enabled the student to develop a realistic plan to achieve her life goals. By reaching out and taking time with that student, Michelle was able to settle her down and give her life direction. Michelle made a difference ... because she cared. She modeled a culture of trust, caring, communication, and respect. Thanks, Michelle for all you did for that student and for your commitment to our university and its values.

Our fourth "stone" is developing modern, excellent facilities and technology. While many improvements have already taken place, we need to continue to advance in this area.

- The need for improved technology has been made clear in our budget deliberations, and we will be committing considerable resources in the coming months to broaden our bandwidth, improve classroom technology, and increase the speed and reliability of the wireless network.
- The Fitzpatrick Auditorium project has been funded, and we intend to proceed with the planned renovations this summer.
- In the coming months, we will continue to improve signage and lighting throughout campus as we strive to make our campus user-friendly, safe, and secure.
- The campaign for the Stadium Complex continues to move forward, and, having now secured donations from the university's leadership, the Steering Committee will be meeting next week to begin the planning and implementation of the next phase of our solicitation.
- Roof replacement will happen this summer on several of our buildings as we continue to preserve our facilities.
- Perhaps not so dramatic, but of increasing importance, is the addition of baby-changing tables in two bathrooms in the Student Center. With all the events we hold in the Center, babies and their needs can't be ignored. Darrell Victory is moving

ahead with this project as we speak. Hopefully, soon we'll no longer have babies changed on the tables in the student center.

Our fifth "stone" in advancing KWU is the establishment of active and meaningful relationships with our "communities" (Salina, the United Methodist Church, Kansas...). You have probably noticed increased KWU publicity on the radio and in the newspaper. This is the beginning of a dramatically improved marketing effort to raise the public awareness of KWU. We are also developing marketing and communications plans to raise these efforts to a much higher level.

- But beyond developing awareness of KWU through better marketing, we are also doing so with real activity. For example, on January 17<sup>th</sup> we formally announced a ten-year partnership with Eisenhower Library. Sponsored by the History Department and initiated by the efforts of our Institutional Advancement Office, this partnership will enhance our academic program, provide student and faculty research opportunities, avail us to outstanding lectures, and provide student internships and professional opportunities. We are also continuing to develop partnerships with Sacred Heart, Combat Aviation Brigade, and St. John's Military School.
- An important aspect of connecting to our communities is the development of improved alumni relations. With the leadership and efforts of Alumni Director Jennifer Rein, alumnus Bob Reynolds, and a host of volunteers, the organization is being restructured and rejuvenated to be broader, more representative, and more active in the university. A new alumni chapter has been established in Goodland, Kansas. The next chapters to join will be in Phoenix, AZ, and Taiwan. We also have added three new inductees to the Hall of Fame: Ellis Wright, John Ritter, and Scott Ritter.

Our university's underlying philosophy is to integrate faith and learning to develop intellect and character. Thus, we have a responsibility to provide for our students an environment in which they can explore their faith and while pursuing their academic work.

While we have activities on our campus that promote this important aspect of our university, we can do better. Accordingly, we will be examining and enhancing the environment and activities that support the development of our students' faith in the coming months to ensure we provide our students the opportunity for a rich and full religious life experience.

Our strategic planning process is moving along on schedule. S.W.O.T. (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) exercises with community leaders, Trustees, staff, faculty, and students have been completed. We are using these results, along with the "Five Stones," to guide the next phase of our plan preparation, which is the thorough examination by committees of the "Five Stones" to determine what must be done to accomplish them. We intend to have the plan completed in time for approval by the Board of Trustees in their June meeting.

Meanwhile, we are not waiting for the completion of the plan to move ahead. Today, I've mentioned many of the initiatives and activities that directly support our "Five Stones." All these activities relate to creating a "user-friendly" campus, where all who visit, attend, or work here feel a comfortable and welcoming atmosphere. Visible enhancements, such as improved

signage and campus maps; more pleasing aesthetics; and safe, secure, and attractive lighting are all a part of this. But more important is the culture of our campus, where visitors feel welcome, faculty and staff feel appreciated, and students are cared for in the manner that we as parents would want for our own children when they are away from us.

As we move forward as a university, we must always remember that we are about *faith* as well as *learning*, and *values* as well as *academics*. The day-to-day behavior we model – which often is done quietly in a one-on-one setting -- has an enormous impact on our effectiveness in accomplishing our institutional goals. Our staff and faculty have given us wonderful examples of what happens when we act in accordance with our values and place our students foremost. While we can certainly celebrate many accomplishments, we have much work yet to be done and many goals to attain. I am confident that, working collaboratively and toward a common set of goals, we can move forward to accomplish our mission better than ever before, and achieve our vision of becoming the top, private university in Central Kansas.

Thank you for your support, your hard work, and your commitment to Kansas Wesleyan University.

Go Coyotes!

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "F. Lamkin", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Fletcher M. Lamkin, Ph.D.  
President and CEO