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“Good Citizens” in a Twenty-First Century University: Social Class, Institutional Texts, and the (Anti-)Democratic Politics of Place

Community colleges are indeed democracy in action.—Nell Ann Pickett

The two-year college as “democracy’s college,” as an institution committed to egalitarian values, is a myth.—William DeGenaro

AT THE 1997 CONFERENCE ON COLLEGE COMPOSITION AND Communication, Nell Ann Pickett ended her Chair’s address with this proclamation: “Community colleges are indeed democracy in action” (98). If these particular words are Pickett’s, the historical truism they reiterate testifies to the enduring trend to tout open-access campuses as bastions of social equality. Such meritocratic discourse is woven throughout two-year college history, as Ronald Weisberger summarizes: “The expansion of our public colleges and universities and particularly community colleges after World War II was supposed to make a difference in providing access to all citizens” (127). Patrick Sullivan alludes to the stamina of this standard story, suggesting that scholars have tended to venerate “the modern community college, with its ‘open-admissions’ policy,” by embracing the deeply entrenched conviction that the institution “democratized what had been essentially a caste system of affluence and privilege in higher education in America” (142). As Weisberger and Sullivan intimate, traditional historiography must circumvent a vexed past to imagine the open-access institution as unambiguous egalitarian entity. Since such (re)writings of history cannot avoid encountering evidence that challenges higher education’s presumed commitment to social equality, these conventional narratives coalesce into what William DeGenaro labels a “myth” (183).

Under the semblance of impartial history, this myth has not only long disregarded classed experiences that call into question the open-access institution’s persistent designation as “‘democracy’s college,’” this authoritative history also exerts considerable influence on the politics of higher education in the present moment (DeGenaro 183). One consequence is that these recurring and disingenuous (re)presentations of the past reinforce prevalent diversity discourses that tend to similarly discount social class as a key marker of sociocultural difference within the contemporary public university. The significance of such exclusion is

illuminated when representative institutional texts are examined in light of the dialectic established by Pickett and DeGenaro. As I argue in this case study focused on my own workplace, Kent State University, this institution's diversity statement tacitly (if inadvertently) legitimates the stock historical narrative by assuming that social class is immaterial. Moreover, I suggest that this institutional text authorizes subtle class bias embedded in KSU's main campus and regional campus mission statements, the latter two texts fashioning opposing and class-bound versions of the "good citizen."¹ As my interpretation maintains, this pair of written artifacts sustains class stratification, although without explicitly mentioning class, at the same time the diversity statement ignores social class difference altogether. Critical rhetorical analysis of this paradox calls attention to potentially far-reaching implications of overlooking social class as a pivotal marker of diversity.

The local history I assemble from a set of Kent State's institutional texts is admittedly narrow, intentionally meticulous, and unavoidably interested—one fragment of the university's recent past that I write into existence to address a distinct concern about ways diversity discourses are shaping higher education. Yet I take my cue from historians like Mariolina Rizzi Salvatori, who describes such an agenda as the process of "productively transforming discursive practices structured not to see (and to make others not to see), not to take into consideration, what might otherwise disturb a given version of history" (xi). My methodology also responds to an aspect of rhetorical historiography articulated by Carolyn Steedman: "Historians read for what is not there: the silences and absences of the documents always speak to us" (qtd. in Carr 237). As I scrutinize my own university, the one about which I know and care the most, I envision other teacher-scholars evaluating ideologies of social class difference embedded in conspicuous and ubiquitous artifacts that contribute to their respective institutions' histories. I do so in anticipation of the likelihood that "[m]any 'local' histories [might] thus fashion a richer, more fluid and permeable national history" (Carr 238). Such a multifaceted history stands poised to raise "[q]uestions about access to higher education [that] are more complicated and more troublesome than questions about what college costs" (Sacks 23).

1. I use the terms "main campus" and "regional campus" throughout. Although I acknowledge the divisive potential of such binary language, I contend that these terms most accurately reflect the two sites' historically contentious relationship. The politics of such naming practices were accentuated at Kent State University in October 2009 when Provost Robert G. Frank announced that "we need to standardize the terminology we use when referring to the individual Regional Campuses." In a university-wide e-mail, he stated, "From this point forward, please preface the name of each Regional Campus with 'Kent State University at.'" Notably, the directive does not stipulate referring to Kent State University at Kent. Whether this standardization policy reflects a new egalitarianism, that is, a move toward more equitable relations among sites comprising KSU's "eight-campus system," remains to be seen.

As Peter Sacks argues, “American society, with its ideological insistence that free markets are best, is getting the higher education system it deserves” (24). He goes on to ask these compelling questions: “[A]re we getting the education system that is just? Are we getting the education system that we need for the future of the democracy?” (24). In light of such concerns about the present-day politics of higher education, this historical moment witnessing the unfettered rise of the corporate university, the active involvement of those who agree that “[e]ducation is *inherently* an ethical and political act” is especially important (Apple ix). Such a collective endeavor might redouble critique of the burgeoning corporate model and potential aftermath, such as an overarching problem James Berger predicts: “Whatever does not contribute to the corporate good will be hard-pressed to justify its continued existence” (25). Such a cooperative undertaking might address Martha Nussbaum’s concern about a university driven by profit in which “educators for economic growth will not want a study of history that focuses on injustices of class, caste, gender, and ethnoreligious membership, because this will prompt critical thinking about the present” (21). Such a collaborative effort might resurrect and reframe for the purpose of the current political battle convictions like that expressed by Michael W. Apple nearly twenty years ago when he insisted that our work as educators involves “intensely personal choices about both the common good and our own place in the struggles toward a society based on it” (ix). The tension that exists between Pickett’s and DeGenaro’s antithetical ideas presents a productive launching point for multiple ethical/political/personal investigations of various institutional texts to expose ways specific

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artifacts position some sites for higher education in terms of a profoundly classed and thus fundamentally anti-democratic politics of place. In my case, I propose that traditional historical discourses that disavow class struggle are reinforced by Kent State’s pivotal and time-honored institutional texts, as they simultaneously expunge

social class difference and reinforce class bias. This recurring rhetorical process not only accomplishes the ideological work of (re)inscribing hegemonic history and the attendant myth of meritocracy, it also masks current inequitable relations that continue to construct the open-access campus as class-bound counterpart to the more selective university.²

2. I recognize that sites for higher education do not cluster on either side of a simplistic democratic/anti-democratic binary. If, despite traditional historiography’s standard story, the open-access institution is not an undisputed locus of democracy, neither is the more-selective university. For a broadly contextualized critique of the U.S. public research university’s ostensibly democratic foundation, see Catherine Chaput’s *Inside the Teaching Machine: Rhetoric and the Globalization of the U.S. Public Research University*.

I make this specific argument at this particular moment because traditional historiography's dominance, as it is reflected in the most common institutional texts, is especially problematic during uncertain economic times like these. Widespread job loss, especially in the manufacturing sector, has prompted increasing numbers of first-generation and working-class students to enroll at open-access institutions across the nation, including Kent State University at Tuscarawas, a regional campus of the second-largest public research institution in Ohio where I teach primarily lower-level writing courses.³ More than fifty years after the genesis of open-access campuses, the most recent upsurge in this specific demographic is continuing to transform U.S. student populations. In light of democracy's resolute avowal that higher education is the great equalizer, addressing repercussions arising from social class inequalities would seemingly be an imperative throughout academe as the nation struggles through one of the most severe economic recessions in U.S. history. Yet contemporary university and political debates alike seem to misread or disregard theoretical analyses and scholarly explanations enumerating the complex and substantial effects of class-biased ideologies that are inevitably concomitant with such monumental shifts in higher education.

Even liberal rhetoric tends to privilege what Keith Kroll and Barry Alford describe as a short-sighted focus on "business-centric education policies." As they explain, "For the Obama administration and those who support their education policies and discourse, 'education' has become narrowly defined as 'job training' and 'workforce development.'" One contributing factor to, as well as one consequence of, such constricted definitions of "education" is that social class is often excluded from articulations of human diversity routinely endorsed by the ostensibly democratic rhetoric characteristic of the public research university. Moreover, this persistent and pervasive erasure of social class remains strikingly evident in the ever-present diversity statement, an institutional text that undertakes the customary aim of inscribing universities' identities, principles, and objectives. As one of the twenty-first-century university's most authoritative institutional texts, the diversity statement speaks in a collective, if not seamless, voice about the place for social class among an accepted array of

3. According to the "most current information available as of January 2011," the American Association of Community Colleges states that this category of institution alone enrolled 12.4 million students or 44% of all U.S. undergraduates. Further, 42% were among the "[f]irst generation to attend college." The "[e]stimated enrollment increase [from] fall 2008-fall 2010" was 15% (See <http://www.aacc.nche.edu/AboutCC/Pages/fastfacts.aspx>). Kent State University confirms this trend, enrolling in spring semester 2011 a total of 39,936 graduate and undergraduate students, of whom 24,909 attended the main campus and 15,027 attended one of the seven regional campuses. Enrollment on the main campus increased by 5.21 percent from fall 2009 to fall 2010 and by 4.51 percent from spring 2010 to spring 2011. Yet on my regional campus, Kent State University at Tuscarawas, enrollment increased 17.63 percent from fall 2009 to fall 2010 and 7.22 percent from spring 2010 to spring 2011

(See <http://www.kent.edu/rpie/enrollment/upload/8-campus-system-fall-10.pdf> and <http://www.kent.edu/rpie/enrollment/upload/8-campus-system-spring-11.pdf>).

diversity markers. For example, a review of the 68 institutions categorized as the top public research universities in the 2010 edition of *America's Best Colleges* reveals that 33 of these institutions acknowledge social class in their diversity statements.⁴ This statistical evidence is telling: Only about half reference class in their public testaments to the worth of sociocultural difference, suggesting that Kent State University shares its inclination to omit class with a number of nationally ranked public research universities.

The University of Illinois typifies the group that does explicitly designate class as one among several named aspects of diversity influencing identity and worldview: "We are committed to diversity because we serve a diverse student population and strive to create an atmosphere and institutional culture which is welcoming to all individuals, regardless of their race, ethnicity, religion, sex, age, sexual orientation, ability/disability, socioeconomic class and national origin" (<http://www.diversity.illinois.edu/statements.html>). This category uses a variety of labels such as "socio-economic status," "social backgrounds [and] economic circumstances," "socioeconomic class," "social circumstances," "economic and social diversity," "the working classes," "social class," "socioeconomic background(s)," "socioeconomic levels," "whether [students] grew up on a farm or a city block," "economic backgrounds," "economic status," "economic strata," "socioeconomic and geographic composition," and "socioeconomic and geographic diversity." Notably, however, even when class is acknowledged, the most frequently used term derives from "socioeconomic status," a label that foregrounds financial standing, namely lower income. In other words, "socio-" or the whole complex of meanings inherent in notions of the "social," is invariably linked to "economic status," effectively reducing social class to income level.

Although referring to class with this most prevalent term does, on one level, reflect recognition of this pivotal difference, such an invocation is nonetheless problematic in the sense bell hooks explained more than fifteen years ago. Citing a "working poor" background that prompted her to understand class as "mainly about materiality," she explains her reconsideration of the concept as a student at Stanford University: "It only took me a short while to understand that class was more than just a question of money, that it shaped values, attitudes, social relations, and the biases that informed the way knowledge would be given and received" (177-78). Considered through this lens that elaborates and complicates class in ways that would appear to be particularly useful in academic settings, "socioeconomic status" func-

4. I reviewed 68 public research institutions categorized as the top public universities by U.S. News and World Report's 2010 online edition of *America's Best Colleges*. (The Web site for U.S. News and World Report now cites the 2011 edition of *America's Best Colleges*, but the source I consulted continues to exist in print format. See: U.S. News and World Report. *America's Best Colleges*. Ed. Peter Meredith. 2010 ed. Washington, DC: U.S. News and World Report, 2009. Print.) To gather this information, I used a site-specific method and the terms "diversity" and/or "diversity statement" to search from each institution's home page for a statement that pertains to the entire university.

tions as a reductive term. In effect, the phrase implies that class is largely an undesirable but (fortunately) temporary marker of difference. The college experience and degree are, in fact, intended to provide the cultural capital to earn higher income and concomitant higher social status—the means by which to leave a working-class background behind. Only one institution among the 33 references “social class”; only one presumes to explicitly name “the working classes.” If the overarching intent of the public research institution’s diversity initiative is to immerse students in a wealth of disparate experiences and perspectives, it is worth considering ways the latter two labels extend the concept of class to span cultural class, such as taste and style, and political class, such as power and influence.

Eighteen other universities among the most widely recognized and respected public research institutions in the U.S. fit into a second general category by virtue of their respective approaches to naming, defining, and valuing social class in higher education. This group eschews specific categories of difference altogether in favor of seemingly more comprehensive, if imprecise, definitions of diversity that list no specific attributes. The University of Delaware speaks for this group, saying the institution “is committed to creating an educational community that is intellectually, culturally and socially inclusive, enriched by the contributions and full participation of persons from many different backgrounds” (<http://www.udel.edu/diversity/>). Yet, if this cohort does not openly dismiss social class, neither does it unequivocally embrace class as integral to diversity. Most likely, such ambiguous statements do not evoke class distinctions at all, given that contemporary U.S. media and culture discourages forthright considerations of class. As Ira Shor notes, for example, “[S]ocial class is an unfamiliar, uncomfortable, sometimes forbidden theme” (163). Alternatively, the more predictable differences, such as those based on race and gender, probably are brought to mind.

A third group resembles the first in that these seventeen universities delineate specific categories of difference such as race and gender, but they neglect to include social class on lists that vary in regard to number and variety of traits specified. North Carolina State reflects the short-list approach: “We welcome people of all races, ethnicities, religions, and sexual orientations” (<http://www.ncsu.edu/diversity/chancellor/pdf/DiversityandtheGlobalResearch.pdf>). Virginia Tech represents the lengthy-list approach: “We reject all forms of prejudice and discrimination, including those based on age, color, disability, gender, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, and veteran status” (<http://www.vt.edu/diversity/principles-of-community.html>). The obvious exclusion of social class here, as well as in the similar statements of fifteen other institutions, is noticeable. On one hand, I make no claim that my review of these 68 public research universities is exhaustive, nor allege that my categorization of their respective diversity statements is indisputable.

Also, although I made a concerted effort to review the most current versions, I cannot ensure that my citations are identical to those now in existence, given the rapid rate at which such institutional texts tend to undergo revision. If this ongoing official attention to these texts confirms their importance to the public research university, even a cursory examination of the top-ranked institutions, which establish precedents and standards for lower-ranked universities, indicates that conspicuous omissions and contradictions surrounding social class difference persist. Moreover, the problem surfaces even in current and prominent artifacts such as diversity statements, despite historical evidence that names social class as a primary factor affecting literacy and despite the increasing number of critical studies about the U.S. university as a site for class stratification and oppression.⁵ Equally troubling is the likelihood that diversity statements work in rhetorical tandem with other university artifacts, as well as with a wide range of national and media discourses to create operative definitions of difference. As collective texts, such statements transcend individual institutions in a joint ideological venture that I argue continues to obscure class conflict endemic to the history of higher education.

In several ways, Kent State University, a public research institution that delineates specific markers of difference but overlooks social class, typifies a sector of the contemporary university in its interpretation and valuation of diversity.⁶ For instance, the “Celebrating Differences” declaration published in the 2010-2011 undergraduate catalog maintains that “Kent State University is by its very nature an institution of intellectual, social and cultural diversity.”⁷ Moreover, the university makes an explicit discursive move that transcends both abstract generalities and *passé* rhetorics of mere tolerance to commemorate the wide-ranging differ-

5. The influence of social class on literacy has informed scholarly discussions since Richard Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working Class Life* appeared in 1957, followed by Burton Clark's 1960 essay, “The ‘Cooling-Out’ Function in Higher Education” that appeared in the *American Journal of Sociology*. Also, as James Thomas Zebroski notes, “Since at least the 1970s, when the work of Richard Ohmann and Ira Shor, among others, began to point out the ways in which English (and the work that English accomplishes) is part of a wider hegemony that keeps capitalism in place in the United States with the consent of the ruled, there has been a general disciplinary agreement that reading and writing have social class connections” (771). In addition, a 2003 issue of *Radical Teacher* examined “Class in the Classroom,” a 2004 special issue of *College English* focused on social class and English studies, and a 2005 special issue of *Teaching English in the Two-Year College* addressed the theme, “The Invisible ‘C’: Class and the Community College.”

6. In the fall of 2010, Kent State University's Division of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion launched a year-long initiative called “100 Commitments” to encourage the entire university community “to support and participate in activities designed to show our commitment to inclusive excellence.” Since one difference highlighted was “socio-economic status,” perhaps this program portends a shift toward including class as a valued aspect of diversity in the university's institutional texts. (See <http://www.kent.edu/diversity/100commitments/background.cfm>).

7. All quotes from Kent State University institutional texts may be found in Appendix A. In addition, each text is listed in the Works Cited under “Kent State University.”

ences it specifies: “[T]he university encourages an atmosphere in which the diversity of its members is understood and appreciated; an atmosphere that is free of discrimination and harassment based on race, religion, ethnic heritage, age, country of national origin, disability, gender, sexual orientation or veteran status.” Although these particular words compose this specific institutional text, the statement voices a perspective not uncommon in the contemporary U.S. university.

Kent State articulates one standard definition of diversity that echoes other twenty-first-century universities in the sense that missing from this otherwise detailed delineation is any mention of social class. Yet allegiance to Kent State’s standpoint on the general merit of diversity is notable among public research institutions in the U.S. and is prevalent in academe as a whole, for, as Walter Benn Michaels observes, “[D]iversity has become virtually a sacred concept in American life today. No one’s really against it; people tend instead to differ only in their degrees of enthusiasm for it and their ingenuity in pursuing it” (12). To be sure, the public research university’s recognition of difference is not only commendable, but also vital to democratic tenets that legitimate the disparate perspectives of various groups of people with whom sovereignty presumably resides in this system of government. Yet, speaking in concert, certain institutional texts celebrate a deficient definition of diversity, their official language neglecting to integrate complex notions of social class into a comprehensive understanding of sociocultural difference. As a result, such texts fail to recognize one of the most consequential factors shaping the experiences of U.S. college students.

In this sense, “Celebrating Differences” is a representative institutional text that reveals a tendency within the public research university to overlook the burgeoning trend to acknowledge that class matters—and matters a great deal if, as journalist Alfred Lubrano succinctly insists, “Class is script, map, and guide” (5). The institution largely disregards the very marker of sociocultural difference that is arguably the foremost influence across American cultures and experiences, unmindful of extensive manifestations of social class such as those Lubrano describes in *Limbo: Blue-Collar Roots, White-Collar Dreams*:

[Class] tells us how to talk, how to dress, how to hold ourselves, how to eat, and how to socialize. It affects whom we marry; where we live; the friends we choose; the jobs we have; the vacations we take; the books we read; the movies we see; the restaurants we pick; how we decide to buy houses, carpets, furniture, and cars; where our kids are educated; what we tell our children at the dinner table (conversations about the Middle East, for example, versus the continuing sagas of the broken vacuum cleaner or the half-wit neighbors); whether we even have a dinner table, or a dinner-time. In short, class is nearly everything about you. And it dictates what to expect out of life and what the future should be. (5)

In light of the putative magnitude of class difference, the reluctance of some universities to recognize social class is curious and troubling—especially since Kent State echoes the U.S. university when it defines itself emblematically in “Celebrating Differences” as “an ideal place to learn about the different cultures and experiences of people in the United States, as well as the rest of the world.”

Even a cursory examination of Kent State University’s most recent diversity statement points to a contemporary academic climate that esteems various social positions and the multiple worldviews they shape and reflect. The text pronounces “[t]he wide variety of people of differing races, ethnic backgrounds, beliefs and values ... one of the greatest strengths of the university” and exhorts the audience “to take advantage of this resource and to learn from one another about the diversity of the human community.” Further, “all members of the university are expected to join in creating a positive atmosphere in which we can learn in an environment that is sympathetic, respectful and supportive.” Advocating this collaborative effort, the statement places emphasis on ensuring that “each student feels a part of the university community.” This account testifies to the university’s concerted and public effort to establish an inclusive environment. At the same time, a palpable silence resounds, muting the pertinence of social class to membership in academe. Diversity statements that omit social class difference obfuscate the middle-class belief systems and experiences that exist as the unacknowledged status quo. This omission, in turn, creates an unfamiliar environment that confronts increasing numbers of working-class students in the university community. Little seems to have changed since bell hooks insisted in 1994 that “[it] is still necessary for students to assimilate bourgeois values in order to be deemed acceptable” (178).

Kent State is not unique in terms of disregarding social class as an assumed and val-

“unavoidably a geographic, economic, sociocultural, historical, political, and ideological place indelibly imprinted by social class”

ued component of diversity, since approximately one-quarter of the universities I appraised take a similar position. That stance should not be surprising in light of Lubrano’s estimation that “[f]or the last 30 years, universities have been awash in the politics of self-awareness, teaching the Holy Trinity of Identity—race, gender, and class. While race and gender have had their decades in the sun, however, class has been obscured and overlooked” (4). Of late, however, what Lubrano terms the unspeakable “C-word” is being uttered more often and

more insistently in some fields to call into question the institutional invisibility of class (4). Although the standard story of higher education's past continues to suppress class analysis, James Thomas Zebroski traces one historical trajectory of the burgeoning claim that class is of considerable consequence when he notes that "scholars in composition and rhetoric ... have been laboring for decades trying to raise social class on the disciplinary radar screen" (773). In addition, his observation that "[s]ince at least the 1970s, ... there has been a general disciplinary acknowledgement that reading and writing have social class connections" (771) pinpoints the pivotal intersection between Pickett's assertion—"Community colleges are indeed democracy in action" (98)—and DeGenaro's counter statement—"The two-year college as 'democracy's college,' as an institution committed to egalitarian values, is a myth" (183). If Pickett's and DeGenaro's claims are antithetical, they nonetheless turn on a shared assumption that the two-year college—and, by extension, the open-access campus—is unavoidably a geographic, economic, sociocultural, historical, political, and ideological place indelibly imprinted by social class. Their differences notwithstanding, Pickett and DeGenaro invoke the mutual belief that democracy and institutions of higher education are inextricably intertwined, although they are clearly at odds when it comes to interpreting the historical truism that casts the open-access campus as democratic shibboleth.

Corroborating ideologies of diversity embedded in Kent State's 2010 "Celebrating Differences," two other twenty-first-century university artifacts—an institution-wide mission statement and its regional campus counterpart—present analogous definitions of sociocultural difference. Yet, rather than elide social class altogether, these ancillary institutional texts turn on class difference, or, more accurately, class partiality. They prove equally instructive in the sense that they similarly rouse from the past a hegemonic historiography to signal their engagement in what Weisberger calls "the ongoing class struggle that has characterized this country since its inception" (138). Although this pair of 2005 mission statements prefigures the diversity homily offered in the current "Celebrating Differences" text, the documents, taken together, suggest that class conflict continues to play out in disquietingly anti-democratic ways at this institutional site. Further, weighted as they are with public research university authority, these texts are indicative of the larger academic sphere in which the neglect of social class cannot help but impede any democratic impetus. Submitting these texts to critical rhetorical analysis not only offers glimpses of a local history in which social class exists, paradoxically, as an "absent presence," but also suggests implications for the whole of academe (Zebroski 773). In a general sense, my analysis takes up Zebroski's charge:

Too often we look microscopically at the stylistic moves of academic discourse, but we rarely look at the class values embodied in such discourse. We study the marks on

the page, but not the power relations—including social class—that are the conditions of any utterance. ... [O]ne must situate academic discourse in an equal study of social class that drives it at all levels, including those of the student, teacher, discipline, and especially the wider society. (790)

In a more specific sense, I insert a public research university and its regional campus counterparts between “discipline” and “wider society” in Zebroski’s evaluation to assess the following institutional texts and to critique classist ideologies, however unintentional, that I maintain reinforce historical patterns of exclusion and oppression glossed by traditional historiography. I suggest that such discourses are quietly complicit in the current prominence of “job training” and “workforce development” on open-access campuses, definitions that Kroll and Alford consider nothing short of “indoctrination.” In their words, such a philosophy “is not education. It has no socially constructive or just outcome, particularly at a time of upheaval and uncertainty. It is a failure of everything that a liberal arts education contributes to a just and democratic society.”

Constructing the “Good Citizen”: Mission Statements, Civic Literacy, and the Democratic Ideal

What American universities have done for a hundred years is prepare some youth to take up places in the professional-managerial class and, if they wish, exercise robust citizenship, too—while preparing other youth for more technical work and narrower citizenship.—Richard Ohmann

If Kent State University’s 2010 “Celebrating Differences” declaration operates as an institutional text that constrains democratic practice by validating a classist belief system with silence and in the name of diversity, two 2005 university mission statements also authored by this public research institution reveal traces of the current diversity statement’s ideological history. Equally infused with an unspoken but nonetheless contentious politics of class, these institutional texts, in turn, call on a legacy of class stratification Richard Ohmann traces across one hundred years. The university-wide mission statement that speaks for Kent State prepares its students precisely as Ohmann observes, “to take up places in the professional-managerial class and, if they wish, exercise robust citizenship too” (39). The sharply contrasting mission statement that addresses the seven surrounding regional sites prepares its students also as Ohmann remarks, “for more technical work and narrower citizenship” (39). At the center of this dual agenda is the public research university’s historical tendency to articulate versions of the “good citizen.” This discursive task reflects an ideological objective, as a detailed comparison of these documents demonstrates, one that is tacitly tied to global and national interests, as well as bound to local economies, politics, and histories. My juxta-

position of these two mission statements that address audiences segregated by social class illustrates ways the standard story of the open-access campus as democratic paradigm is a myth sustained by such institutional texts.

As linked rhetorical artifacts, the statements belie the democratic ideal by fashioning site-specific and classed notions of civic literacy. Defined by Donald Lazere as simply “critical citizenship,” civic literacy involves the public construction of a sociopolitical and economic landscape for the practice of democracy (xii). The class-bound politics of place, veiled or overt, on which particular constructions of civic literacy are predicated consequentially illuminate the university’s differentially imposed model of the good citizen. Although both mission statements operate as conventional declarations of “rationale and purpose,” “responsibilities toward students and the community,” and “vision[s] of student, faculty, and institutional excellence,” their class-inflected rhetoric deploys conflicting philosophies of higher education contingent on geographic locations and corresponding social positions (Meacham 21). The two local texts under consideration provide insights into recent history in terms of this university’s prevailing notion of civic literacy by marking ways social class indelibly imprints institutional identities tied to place. Equally important, these local texts contribute to a more expansive public rhetoric that continues to normalize class stratification, ironically, at a purported site for consummate democratic practice, the open-access campus.

The 2005 mission statement titled “The Role and Mission of Kent State University” and presumably applicable to the entire eight-campus system offers a certain image of the ideal good citizen. At the same time, this discursive construction illustrates ideologies of social class that invariably shape the politics of place. The university states immediately and explicitly, “The mission of Kent State University is to prepare students for responsible citizenship and productive careers, broaden intellectual perspectives and foster ethical and humanitarian values.” Notably, “responsible citizenship” is the principle positioned to draw the most attention. This notion appears first in the list of four major endeavors and serves as an overarching rhetorical context for the three broad tenets that follow. The concluding phrase of the mission statement’s opening sentence—to “foster ethical and humanitarian values”—couples with “responsible citizenship” to frame two other aims: to prepare students for “productive careers” and to “broaden intellectual perspectives.” The latter two objectives are those students themselves might be more likely to express, but these intentions are positioned between the first and the last, thus garnering less notice and intimating that they modify the preeminent idea: the university’s molding of the responsible, ethical humanitarian—historically the U.S. university’s quintessential good citizen.

Notably, “responsible citizenship” at this site necessitates “productive careers,” the

two phrases linked with the coordinating conjunction “and” rather than with a perhaps less-binding comma to stress each idea equally and to intimate how tightly the two ideas are aligned. In addition, “productive careers” connotes professions beneficial to human society as a whole when read against the foundational tenet of “responsible citizenship” to which it is firmly attached, as well as when regarded in terms of “ethical and humanitarian values.” The choice of words and their arrangement in the sentence suggest that the imagined good citizens’ “broaden[ed] intellectual perspectives” would inspire them to rise above a mere job where “productive” would likely take on a different meaning altogether. These undergraduates are not, as Lenore Beaky describes students in a “new, ‘reimagined’ CUNY community college” (19) set on “a strict pathway” that “marches them straight through their courses to a diploma and a job, like so many pieces of chocolate in the *I Love Lucy factory*” (21).

Further, two subsequent points in this mission statement speculate that these careers will play out in a global context. First, main campus good citizens are prepared for their roles in larger society by “faculty and staff [who] are engaged in teaching, research, creative expression, service and partnerships that address the needs of a complex and changing world.” The future work of responsible citizens is prefigured as influential in a multifaceted yet ultimately unknowable realm beyond the local community, beyond the university. Second, the mission statement reinforces assumptions about the far-reaching influence of this good citizen’s anticipated capabilities with a concluding point that summarizes the university’s overall goal: “By discovering and sharing knowledge in a broad array of graduate and undergraduate programs, Kent State University meets the dynamic needs of a global society.”

If the main campus mission statement lives up to its ambitions, these good citizens, as members of “a supportive and inclusive learning community,” benefit from a university experience that expects participation, via their academic programs, in “discovering” knowledge. This highest level of the creative intellectual process necessarily resists the status quo by questioning and reconfiguring existing understandings of what counts as “knowledge.” In addition, the stipulation invites good citizens to participate in “sharing” knowledge. Eschewing the transmission of ostensibly incontrovertible facts from faculty to students, this erudite interchange among recognized equals, even partners, instead takes for granted the legitimacy of students’ versions of “knowledge

Given a mission that sanctions students’ perceptions—what knowledge they bring to this collaborative endeavor, as well as what new knowledge they make—the main campus good citizen is entitled to assume the status of a fully functioning political practitioner in contemporary democratic society. This student is thus one who is not only likely cognizant of “the capacity for conscious political action,” but also capable of embracing “the ability to influence [other] citizens or political institutions” and willing to create or at least “shape the world

we live in" (Chesney and Feinstein 1-2). In short, good citizens constructed at this rhetorical site are responsible, productive, intellectual, ethical, and humanitarian agents who embody the political authority and exercise the intellectual prowess necessary to create and share knowledge. This knowledge, in turn, continuously reshapes global society in terms conducive to validating their particular interests.

When the main campus mission statement is read through the lens of social class, the document makes a public declaration of rationale, responsibility, and vision in the interest of creating good citizens who are clearly groomed to practice "robust citizenship" (Ohmann 39). At midpoint in the first decade of the twenty-first century and in only 115 words, the main campus mission statement agitates for a type of middle-class citizenship that necessitates a particular model student. This student is not reined in by a "strict pathway" but trusted to explore the Kent State University educational experience by defining the university's abstract guidelines in ways that are potentially politically empowering (Beaky 21). This good citizen is entitled to, prepared to, and expected to take a leadership role in shaping the global community by means of participatory democracy. At the same time, the main campus mission statement is an authoritative institutional text that serves as an ideological backdrop for its regional campus counterpart, the latter a more-specific and significantly longer 192-word directive. This text, which could be considered an addendum and thus ancillary to the main campus statement as the university-wide pronouncement, nonetheless imagines a quite different institutional identity and purpose, one unmistakably steeped in ideologies of social class difference. The good citizen at this site is hailed primarily as a narrowly perceived citizen-worker, one who is tacitly urged to abdicate political power attendant with higher education.

The construction of the citizen-worker in the opening line of the regional campus mission statement is illustrative: "The mission of the regional campuses is to extend access

"conscripted into service for technical programs presumably attractive to the audience of citizen-workers"

to the quality higher education programs and services of Kent State University to the residents of Northeast Ohio." Although this rhetorical move predicts a commitment to inclusion, lending some measure of truth to Kent State's ubiquitous "eight-campus network" naming strategy, the gesture is immediately undercut by the subsequent line: "The campuses share the liberal education goals of the university and strive to meet the needs of society with technical programs that help prepare a paraprofes-

sional work force." At this markedly different geopolitical place, "the liberal education goals of the university" and the charge to "meet the needs of society" are conscripted into service for technical programs presumably attractive to the audience of citizen-workers. Rather than meeting the needs of society by creating and sharing knowledge, the regional campus good citizen is prepared to put existing knowledge to work in circumscribed arenas.

This familiar stipulation that invokes the specter of vocational education historically reserved for the working class contradicts liberal education goals. In a sense, the 2005 statement envisages current mainstream discourse that undergirds the CUNY community college slated to open in 2012 where "work-based learning [will be] an integral part of the college's mission," where "[s]tudents will solve problems identified by agencies or businesses," where "prescribed pathways for each major ... limit choice and exploration" (Beaky 21). Rather than recognizing, claiming, and using political power borne of creating and sharing knowledge—and attendant with embracing "responsible citizenship," pursuing "productive careers," broadening "intellectual perspectives," and cultivating "ethical and humanitarian values," as the main campus statement pronounces—the regional campus good citizen is hardly imagined as a potential contributor to the global good. Rather than thinking intellectual, ethical humanitarian, political actor, and responsible citizens with global interests and influence, regional campus good citizens do not measure their "successful college experience" in terms of exploration and discovery but as trained paraprofessionals who might logically support the "productive careers" of their main campus counterparts.

As unentitled citizen-workers, emphasis on the worker, these not-quite-professional good citizens are also not quite full members of what Kent State terms in the main campus statement "a supportive and inclusive learning community." Instead, the regional campus good citizens are not depicted as participating contributors to larger groups, despite "the distinctive feature of being part of the larger university." Rather, this good citizen is an isolated individual engaged in self-development, or, at best, one among a loose association of "persons who see the campus as a way to build a secure and better life for themselves." This exhortation advocates a kind of class jumping, but the self-help approach serves only the individual and only in limited ways, since membership into the global community through the university is not genuinely extended. The regional campus mission statement's focus on training individuals to build a local workforce ties this good citizen to the campus and to the community at the same time it disconnects the citizen-worker from both university and global communities. In effect, such rhetoric severs this good citizen from larger political networks, thus discouraging her/him from seeking agency or seizing opportunities to influence global society as an intellectual, humanitarian, responsible citizen.

As is the main campus good citizen, the regional campus citizen-worker is prompted to “meet the needs of society.” But those needs, indeed those imagined societies, are formulated differently, the citizen-workers perhaps using their technical and “paraprofessional” degrees to assist the good citizens, who are taught that their careers “address the needs of a complex and changing world,” that their knowledge permits them to influence “global society,” that their political power entitles them to shape the world to suit their own interests. The sole regional campus charge that would appear to highlight civic literacy as critical citizenship is mitigated by yet again distancing the individual from wider spheres of influence. Regional campuses “meet the needs of society with technical programs that help prepare a paraprofessional work force,” not to benefit global society but to “provide their communities with public service activities of an educational nature for personal growth and development.” The potential power to transform global society in ways that invariably delimit opportunities available to local communities and individuals is obstructed by the focus on the individual’s self-enrichment or, paradoxically, undifferentiated membership in a “work force” within a truncated sphere of public discourse and influence. Although the regional campus institutional text demonstrates an agenda that is similar to the main campus mission—the construction of the “good citizen”—the university identity and purpose to which access is extended are fundamentally different at this rhetorical site.

Testifying to the troubling, class-bound ideologies of citizen-worker articulated in the regional campus mission statement is the geopolitical context for students on the Tuscarawas Campus, the southernmost site of Kent State University and one of the northernmost counties designated Appalachia. An issue of *Kent State Magazine* that includes a piece on Appalachia describes the region as “rich in natural resources, [but] characterized by poverty” (Lambert 10). As Lisa Lambert observes, Appalachia enjoys “a distinct cultural heritage,” one that includes “a long history of suffering abuse by corporate interests” (10). She goes on to point out that “[i]n no other part of the country do so few citizens own so little of the land on which they live and work” (10). Students who attend Kent State University at Tuscarawas typically reflect a demographic that coincides with Appalachia and differs dramatically from the nation and from the rest of Ohio in terms of the “[p]ercentage of adults over 25 who have college degrees” (Lambert 11). The national average is 24%, the Ohio average is 21%, but the Ohio Appalachian average stagnates at 12% (Lambert 11). The regional campus mission statement, operating as a persuasive and classist rhetoric of place—geographic, sociocultural, economic, political, historical, and ideological—resounds with silence in terms of a critical citizenship that might educate and empower one of the most disenfranchised groups of people in the U.S. to shape their own life possibilities, as well as influence the future of the nation and the world.

Open-Access Institutions for a New Century: Social Class and the Practice of Democracy

While majority rule and consensus reflect the appearance of democratic practice, they often do not seriously incorporate the voices and lived experiences of particular groups and individuals, and therefore often reproduce the dominant culture rather than questioning and transforming it. Our commitment to cultural diversity, therefore, remains unfinished if it merely subordinates the voices, positions, and lived experiences of socially marginalized groups in an unaltered view and theory of the world.

—NCTE Resolution on Diversity

If Kent State University's 2005 main and regional campus mission statements, coupled with the 2010 diversity statement, can be considered representative institutional texts for a sizable sector of the public research institution, they offer scant evidence of a nascent critical class consciousness that would recognize the implications of this far-reaching marker of sociocultural difference. To date, what is missing here is also what is "absent in the Obama administration's education policies and discourse," and that is "the role of the community college [and open-access campuses] in providing a liberal arts education that teaches and encourages students to become informed and engaged citizens in a democratic society" (Kroll and Alford). Significantly, the most current revisions of Kent State's mission statements differ so slightly from their immediate antecedents as to suggest that these indicators of the contemporary U.S. university have yet to heed caveats such as the 1999 "Resolution on Diversity" posited by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). The university-authored texts under consideration here invite the criticism that this institution reflects merely "the appearance of democratic practice" (NCTE). Perhaps like a number of public research universities, Kent State neglects to "seriously incorporate the voices and lived experiences of particular groups and individuals" and thus "reproduce the dominant culture rather than questioning and transforming it"—at least in terms of "voices and lived experiences" that speak to social class difference (NCTE). KSU's institutional texts fall short of articulating a fully developed diversity ideal that would facilitate objectives such as NCTE's to "[p]romote conversations with a broad range of groups and constituencies about the values of difference for a democracy." Left out are those ostensibly united by social class, such as "members of underfunded rural ... communities," a descriptor that best identifies those who attend several of KSU's regional campuses, particularly my own Kent State University at Tuscarawas.

If Kent State's newly revised mission statements supplant the 2005 documents, at the same time they reiterate their precursors by continuing to embrace an overarching aim "to discover, create, apply, and share knowledge." The current regional campus statement pre-

sumably shares this goal, as did the 2005 text, the 2010 version opening with slightly revised wording that declares the intention to “make the resources of the 27th largest university in the country accessible to the citizens of Northeast Ohio.” The main campus mission statement, now shortened to 78 words, seems to offer even more autonomy for students to create and share knowledge, as it rightly continues to stress the aims to “foster ethical and humanitarian values” and to advocate “responsible citizenship.” The current statement continues to set up “responsible citizenship and productive careers” as parallel objectives. Although the newest text repositions this conjoined aim as the culmination of the university’s mission rather than as the opening precept, the emphasis on this purpose remains clear. Significantly, and perhaps ironically, an added stipulation refers implicitly to the university’s “Celebrating Differences” philosophy by stressing in this related institutional text the importance of “diverse learning environments” to “educate [students] to think critically and to expand their intellectual horizons while attaining the knowledge and skills necessary for responsible citizenship and productive careers.” Presumably, these “diverse learning environments” are now even more critical to the Kent experience; presumably, they are integral to the entire “eight-campus educational system,” although there is no indication that social class difference might also contribute a valuable perspective.

The regional campus statement now names the categories of students to whom access has been extended—“nontraditional’ students: people returning to the classroom after having begun or raised a family; manufacturing and business workers in need of retraining in the face of economic change; bright, motivated young students earning college credit while still in high school; and ... the ‘traditional’ student.” Yet this access remains limited, reinforcing rather than challenging the historic open-access pattern Ohmann describes “of tailor[ing] course offerings to the just-in-time needs of students entering or returning to the job market” (42). Such institutions “frankly imagine students as customers, not as citizens or as future leaders or as novices in a common culture” (Ohmann 42). Kroll and Alford reiterate the point, claiming that “those attending community colleges are no longer viewed as citizens or learners (or even at times as students) but rather as economic entities, as ‘workers’ or a ‘workforce.’” The newest regional campus mission statement demarcates students almost entirely by the local community and its need for workforce training. Although the text has deleted the “paraprofessional” label, it retains the embedded assumption that this distinctly classed population is best suited for “programs and services that enhance business and employment opportunities in a time of economic transition.”

If this rhetorical site shares the broad goal “to discover, create, apply, and share knowledge,” the regional campus statement also continues to limit the definition of “knowledge.” This location for higher education is “charged with the task of delivering a wide vari-

ety of area-specific technical education and training to the communities it serves.” In 245 words, 53 more words than required to articulate the 2005 mission, the 2010 statement is more a directive than a philosophy, although an explicit invitation to consider the regionals as a place to complete “the first and second years of coursework leading to the bachelor’s degree in numerous programs” complicates and challenges the strict segregation of main and regional campuses. On the other hand, the sharper emphasis on this option is not as egalitarian as it might first appear when DeGenaro’s understanding of an “inherent contradiction in the nature of open-access learning” is considered:

It is true that some five million students—many of them first-generation college students of working-class and racial or ethnic minority backgrounds—gain access to higher education by matriculating on two-year campuses. It is also true that the two-year college has a well-documented history of tracking students into remedial classes, vocational tracks, and eventually low-level sectors of the economy. (183)

On the whole, the contrast with the main campus good citizen is disturbingly familiar. Regional campus students are envisioned in their roles as trained workers/customers who use their circumscribed technical knowledge to make a living as they serve their local communities. If main campus students are imagined as thinkers/actors who also must make a living, that reality is enhanced by the promise of a career that simultaneously (re)makes a receptive world. These educated future leaders need only accept their invitation into “responsible citizenship” by using their knowledge and their broadened “intellectual horizons,” as well as their experience in “diverse learning environments,” to serve and influence “Ohio and the global community.”

In the process of articulating the university’s historical mission to construct “good citizens,” this set of institutional texts “subordinates the voices, positions, and lived experiences of socially marginalized groups,” such as working-class students, “in an unaltered view and theory of the world,” at least in terms of ways social class must invariably and inevitably shape perspectives on social realities (NCTE). These telling texts establish public identities that hinge on democratic ideals; yet they lend credence to Donald Macedo’s observation that “while schools are charged with promoting a discourse of democracy, they often put structures in place that undermine the substantive democratic principles they claim to teach” (1). I suspect that these university artifacts, rather than isolated examples, work with a host of contemporary and historical political discourses to structure higher education in ways that posit democracy and open-access campuses as far from synonymous concepts at this particular historical benchmark.

Then again, I offer my class-conscious reading of these salient documents in recognition of the power of dialectical and politically motivated rhetorical analysis to re-read his-

tory, re-write the present, and re-imagine a future in which the open-access institution might plausibly fulfill its promise as “democracy in action” (Pickett 98), a future in which the open-access institution might rightfully claim its place as “the last bastion of democratic higher education in this country” (Kroll and Alford). As Jack Meacham notes, “College mission statements can be effective tools for addressing problems, moving conversations among faculty and administrators forward, and crafting long-term, sustainable solutions” (21). If teacher-scholars take those texts into their classrooms, such statements can also be subjects of critical reading, insightful discussion, trenchant rhetorical analysis, and powerful writing for the very students institutional texts would presume to write into being. Class-conscious debates about mission that invoke multiple and diverse voices can conceivably bring into existence the open-access campus Kroll and Alford envision as one “whose mission must be to foster the democratic ideal of providing an education that offers students from all backgrounds the chance to realize their full potential as human beings.”

At this uneasy moment in higher education, assessing institutional texts such as diversity and mission statements is an academic imperative. If such texts construct as well as reflect inequitable social realities, they can be sculpted to serve as harbingers of equitable social change. At this critical juncture in participatory democracy when corporate-sponsored government seeks to invigorate the faltering economy largely at the expense of the working class, Apple’s address to “radical teachers” two decades ago resonates all the more insistently:

No matter how hard others may try to purge the ethical and the political from the way we think and act as teachers, those educators committed to the continuing attempt to build a more democratic and caring set of economic, political, and cultural institutions know that, as educators, we must choose and we must act. There really is no other choice. (ix)

We can choose to rewrite existing diversity and mission statements that, willfully or unknowingly, jeopardize democracy. We can choose to rewrite the full range of institutional texts with the collective and explicit purpose of sponsoring an informed rhetorical practice that, in turn, fosters critical citizenship. This collaborative endeavor to name, critique, and redress a full range of inequalities arising from sociocultural differences gives voice to the foundational principle that all students on all campuses in a diverse and democratic nation deserve the kind of schooling Kent State University envisions in its “Celebrating Differences” statement: “an education that will prepare them equally to pursue successful careers and to become good citizens and productive members of an increasingly diverse society in the United States and the world at large.” Until then, “[o]ur commitment to cultural diversity remains unfinished” (NCTE).

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Appendix A

CELEBRATING DIFFERENCES (2010)

Kent State University is by its very nature an institution of intellectual, social and cultural diversity. The university is thus an ideal place to learn about the different cultures and experiences of people in the United States, as well as the rest of the world. Education at Kent State occurs through a variety of formal instructional settings, co-curricular activities and less formal opportunities to meet and get to know other students, staff and faculty. The wide variety of people of differing races, ethnic backgrounds, beliefs and values constitutes one of the

greatest strengths of the university. It is important to take advantage of this resource and to learn from one another about the diversity of the human community. Such an opportunity can exist only in an environment in which each student feels a part of the university community. To this end, the university encourages an atmosphere in which the diversity of its members is understood and appreciated; an atmosphere that is free of discrimination and harassment based on race, religion, ethnic heritage, age, country of national origin, disability, gender, sexual orientation or veteran status. Thus, all members of the university are expected to join in creating a positive atmosphere in which we can learn in an environment that is sympathetic, respectful and supportive.

Within this environment, Kent State offers an opportunity to all students for an education that will prepare them to pursue successful careers and to become good citizens and productive members of an increasingly diverse society in the United States and the world at large. (<http://www.kent.edu/catalog/2010/aboutkent/celebrating/index.cfm>)

THE ROLE AND MISSION OF KENT STATE UNIVERSITY (2005)

The mission of Kent State University is to prepare students for responsible citizenship and productive careers, broaden intellectual perspectives and foster ethical and humanitarian values. Our faculty and staff are engaged in teaching, research, creative expression, service and partnerships that address the needs of a complex and changing world. Kent State's eight-campus network, anchored by the largest residential campus in the region, serves as a key resource for economic, social, cultural and technological advancement.

Kent State is a supportive and inclusive learning community devoted to teaching excellence and academic freedom. By discovering and sharing knowledge in a broad array of graduate and undergraduate programs, Kent State University meets the dynamic needs of a global society. (http://dept.kent.edu/ksuprovost_office/ugcat/2005/000-015.pdf)

THE REGIONAL CAMPUS NETWORK MISSION (2005)

The mission of the Regional Campuses is to extend access to the quality higher education programs and services of Kent State University to the residents of Northeast Ohio. The campuses share the liberal education goals of the university and strive to meet the needs of society with technical programs that help prepare a paraprofessional work force. The campuses are an entry point to higher education for high school graduates, and they provide access for persons who see the campus as a way to build a secure and better life for themselves. The campuses provide coursework at the freshman and sophomore levels in technical and baccalaureate areas, in the university's 36-hour LERs, associate's degree programs, selected bachelor's degrees, continuing study and basic skills classes, as well as selected junior, senior and graduate courses. For students, the campuses are close to home and affordable,

and many enroll on a part-time basis. The campuses provide the breadth of programs and services necessary for a successful college experience, have the distinctive feature of being part of the larger university and provide their communities with public service activities of an educational nature for personal growth and development.

(http://dept.kent.edu/ksuprovost_office/ugcat/2005/286-335.pdf)

MISSION STATEMENT (2010)

The mission of Kent State University is to discover, create, apply and share knowledge, as well as to foster ethical and humanitarian values in the service of Ohio and the global community. As an eight-campus educational system, Kent State offers a broad array of academic programs to engage students in diverse learning environments that educate them to think critically and to expand their intellectual horizons while attaining the knowledge and skills necessary for responsible citizenship and productive careers.

(<http://www.kent.edu/president/mission-statement.cfm>)

REGIONAL COLLEGE MISSION (2010)

The mission of the Regional College is to make the resources of the 27th largest university in the country accessible to the citizens of Northeast Ohio. The Regional College is also charged with the task of delivering a wide variety of area-specific technical education and training to the communities it serves. Finally, delivering programs and services that enhance business and employment opportunities in a time of economic transition is an integral part of the mission of the Regional College. It carries out this mission through the efforts of a faculty committed to the highest standards in the scholarships of discovery, integration, application, teaching and university citizenship. Faculty members actively pursue a variety of creative endeavors, regularly contribute to the scholarship in their disciplines, take pride in their continuing pedagogical successes, and are recognized by the wider University community with teaching and professional development awards. Regional campus faculty are visible citizens in the communities they serve, as well as at every level of university governance.

The Regional Campuses have an open enrollment policy and an expanding post-secondary enrollment option program. Many are “nontraditional” students: people returning to the classroom after having begun or raised a family; manufacturing and business workers in need of retraining in the face of economic change; bright, motivated young students earning college credit while still in high school; and for the “traditional” student, the Regional Campuses offer the first and second years of coursework leading to the bachelor's degree in numerous programs.

(<https://www.kent.edu/catalog/2010/collegesprograms/re/index.cfm>)



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