



Guide to Giving Speeches and Presentations

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Introduction

Every speech, every presentation, every news release presents Kent State with a significant opportunity to go beyond the immediate purpose of the communication to expand the audience's understanding of our institution, what we stand for and our vision of the future. This can be accomplished by incorporating the university's three key messages:

Key message one:

Kent State is a university that changes people's lives.

Key message two:

Kent State is a university that makes ideas work.

Key message three:

Kent State is a university that is worth caring about.

All speeches and presentations should be structured so these messages can be reflected vividly — using stories about Kent State people and programs wherever possible — in the final product.

This Guide to Giving Speeches and Presentations will help you do this. By using the feedback/report form on Page 7, you will also help us monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of our communications.

The power of key messages

The power of key messages revolves around three major factors:

1. Messages illuminate what an organization stands for.
2. Messages humanize an organization, illustrating that myriad stories about real people make a place what it is.
3. Messages help an organization take charge of and shape its communications, so that they tell its story on its own terms.

In the competitive environment of higher education, consistent messages help us create a distinctive identity with our various audiences. Use these messages whenever possible to reinforce Kent State's stature as a major university providing inclusive, highest quality learning and broad access throughout our eight-campus system.

Sample speech

Dr. Lester A Lefton, President, gave the following speech on Nov. 2, 2006, to university and community leaders at the semiannual Bowman Breakfast. The speech, “Academic Excellence, Student Success and Personal Responsibility” incorporated Kent State’s key messages, as noted below.*

Good morning, everyone. Isn’t it a great day to be at Kent State? I am delighted to participate in this great town–gown tradition for the first time. I say that as president and as a proud Tree City resident of two months.

Linda and I came to Kent from New Orleans, Louisiana. The truth is it took about two days before Linda and I knew that Southern hospitality has nothing on the special “Midwestern hospitality” we found here. And as we tell our friends in New Orleans, we are gladly trading the inconvenience of real winters — and the crazy weather like last Saturday’s — for the knowledge that Kent sits above sea level.

The speech evoked a spirit of excellence unique to Kent State.

But there is one thing above all others that we tell our friends, family and former colleagues across the country: We have landed at a university that we believe is a gem and a marvelous community asset. It is a place where lives are changed, futures are made and careers are built.

Kent State is a university with the “right stuff.” We have what it takes — especially our talented faculty, staff, students and loyal alumni — to achieve far greater academic excellence and the national renown that goes with it.

We have the capacity for helping our students achieve far greater success — success we can measure in advances from improved learning to higher graduation rates.

The next section illustrates the university’s commitment to regional well-being and personal responsibility. Key Message: Kent State is a university that changes people’s lives.

We also have the resources to be an even stronger partner for progress within our region and our state. That includes building on the mutually beneficial links between the Kent Campus and the city of Kent. Building bridges — forging links — is a standing university priority for me.

Let me take that a step further. I believe it is a standing responsibility. A major, public research institution like ours should be actively engaged in the civic sector. It is part of our historic public–service mission.

During my 34 years in higher education, I have thought a lot about this and other university responsibilities. One of the most fundamental is the duty to teach students about personal responsibility.

At Kent State, we see it as our obligation to provide education that does more than prepare students for their chosen careers. We provide education that fosters engaged and responsible citizenship.

I am proud to report that we are doing that in a remarkable range of courses, programs, organizations and activities. Let me give six examples out of dozens that I could cite.

1. Last year, more than 400 students, faculty, staff and community members spent spring break rebuilding areas devastated by Hurricane Katrina. This year, the group “Kent State United for Biloxi” will make two trips.

2. Kent State is home to student organizations such as a chapter of Habitat for Humanity and Operation Smile, which funds surgeries for children with cleft lips and palates.

3. Our Center for Student Involvement offers a series of focused workshops on leadership.

4. We also offer a leadership certificate program and a Leadership Academy within our residence hall system.

5. And our superb athletics program is built on a foundation of personal responsibility — as well as winning.

6. Our Mortar Board students sponsor the Giving Tree program to benefit the youth of the King Kennedy Community Center in Ravenna.

In these ways and many more, we are working to set a moral tone for students — one that is unfortunately lacking in our society.

We are living at a time when many of our children do not believe there is such a thing as consequences to their actions — as my first grade teacher used to say — things do go on your “permanent record.” Too many learn the hard way that actions like cheating or driving drunk will find their way to that record, and can derail the lives they envision for themselves.

President Harry S. Truman’s famous desk plaque said, “The buck stops here.” In 2006, it’s unfortunately become, “The buck stops here, unless I can pawn it off on someone or something else.”

Newton Minnow was a keen social commentator who chaired the Federal Communications Commission under President Kennedy. Minnow observed that: “We’ve gotten to the point where everybody’s got a right, and nobody’s got a responsibility.”

Sadly, his quote rings as true today as it did 40-plus years ago. I’ll give you a few examples. Most of us can remember a time when getting fired meant you put your tail between your legs and prayed for a chance to redeem yourself in a new job. Today, that response — that acceptance of personal responsibility — is often replaced by the instinct to call an attorney and sue for your job back.

We're living in a world in which Jeff Skilling, former Enron CEO, is found guilty of destroying the lives of hundreds — perhaps thousands — of good-faith investors; he is sternly sentenced to 24 years in prison; and then he walks out of court with his head held high vowing to appeal.

And we're living in a world in which too many of our political leaders — of both parties — espouse family values as they engage in reprehensible behavior and then approve ads filled with ugly personal attacks.

Clearly, the lack of personal responsibility we see around us is not confined to young people. And it is not just an individual concern.

I like the way Thomas Jefferson put it. He said, "A nation, as a society, forms a moral person, and every member of it is personally responsible for his society."

Jefferson's statement about nations holds true for cities and states. For example, every state is responsible for providing its citizens with access to high-quality education — whether it's kindergarten or college.

It is a sad fact that Ohio does not measure up well against Jefferson's definition of government responsibility. Not when it has cut state funding for higher education so drastically in recent years.

The following paragraphs describe the importance of philanthropic support. Key Message: Kent State is a university that is worth caring about.

Fifteen years ago, Ohioans could depend on the state to support more than half the cost of their college education. Today, that number has dropped to less than one-third and only 23 percent of our total budget comes from the state of Ohio.

Let me stress that the responsibility for keeping higher education accessible cuts both ways. We can all be proud of Kent State's many efforts to contain operating costs on one hand and raise private scholarship funds on the other.

As many of you know, we exceeded the \$100 million goal of our first major fund-raising campaign a few years ago. Efforts are well underway to make our upcoming Centennial Campaign an even greater success. The truth is our dreams of planting Kent State's flag on higher academic ground will depend on it.

The next segment positions the university as a leader in regional partnerships, new knowledge and cultural offering. Key Message: Kent State is a university that makes ideas work.

As a public university, another of our responsibilities is helping to boost our region's economy. That includes supporting the region in our own backyard. We do that in many ways.

For example: As the county's largest employer, Kent State plays a key role in generating tax dollars that support city services. (Mayor Fender and City Manager Ruller remind me of this on a regular basis.)

Our faculty members produce innovations with commercial potential in areas from biomedicine to display technology. Of course, you all know about the Kent Display success story — a story based on technology invented at our Liquid Crystal Institute®. We hope to feed the city's coffers with many more economic opportunities based on faculty research.

And Kent State offers the kind of educational, cultural and recreational resources that attract employers and employees alike. From the Miami String Quartet to Porthouse Theatre, we educate, entertain and engage our community.

I know I'm preaching to the converted when I say that Kent — and our entire region — need more employers providing more jobs. At the same time, we must stop the exodus of educated workers that is reaching critical mass regionally and state-wide. And I think that Kent State University is part of the solution.

As a university I feel that we have a responsibility to ensure that our students are trained superbly. They are competing in a global economy, one in which their competitors are not students from the University of Akron or from Cleveland State, but the University of California, New York University, and the Sorbonne. Our students must be able to compete for jobs, for position and for careers in a very different world. We know that our students must be able to function effectively in a global workplace and a global society for their sake and ours. We would be remiss if we did not put academic excellence and a myriad of ideas and people at their fingertips. They have to be educated and trained with one key idea as our watchword — that is excellence.

Excellence at Kent State must be at the forefront of everything that we do. This means excellence in the classroom, library, laboratory, studio and performance stage. I am challenging our faculty and students every day to be at the top of their game, to be at the cutting edge, to look beyond the borders of Portage County, indeed beyond the borders of Ohio. It is our responsibility at Kent State to make sure that our young people — and those going back to school — not only compete but also excel. We are in the process of putting excellence in action by ensuring that we have top-quality faculty, the best facilities that we can afford and a commitment to an optimistic attitude. By putting excellence into action we allow students to write scripts for their lives that are not predefined; rather, their education frees them to lead authentic lives, filled with family, friends, and both personal and career fulfillment.

If we accept our responsibility and follow through, we help create student success. Quite honestly, along with academic excellence, at the top of my priority list is student success. I'm deeply concerned for Ohio and especially for Northeast Ohio that far too many students do not complete their degrees. The reality in today's world is that a young woman or man who does not have a college degree is at a competitive disadvantage. Far too many students in Ohio do not complete their degrees; indeed, relative to our border states and the nation, we lag behind in the number of individuals on a per capita basis with baccalaureate degrees. This makes Portage County, Northeast Ohio and the state of Ohio less desirable for business development. It's for this reason, among others, that businesses are leaving Ohio. It's for this reason, among others, that people age 18 to 40 are leaving Ohio.

We have a responsibility to help reverse this trend. The data show that states with a well-educated populace have vigorous economies. States that have invested in higher education are seeing the fruits of that investment. Clearly states such as Texas, North Carolina and California are notable examples.

We need to ensure that our students complete their degrees because without completing their degrees, they can't compete in the marketplace. I assert that it is our responsibility as a university to create an academic environment that facilitates and fosters student success. I also assert that it is our responsibility as a community to make sure that students find Kent State a warm and welcoming environment. Ann Arbor, Ithaca, Boston even Columbus, welcome their students, and in doing so not only facilitate their success but also the economic vitality of their communities.

The paragraphs below amplify the theme of making ideas work by describing the university as an engine for economic and community development.

As someone new to the area, I appreciate how much Northeast Ohio has to offer. The fall scenery here rivals that of my native New England. And there are few equals to the cultural venues we can enjoy on campus, downtown and within easy driving distance.

Yet to be truly competitive with other cities and states, we need to do more. I suggest we all look at the challenge of economic growth through the lens of personal responsibility.

I see it reflected in academic excellence and student success but also in the vision of a first-class hotel and conference center. I also see it in the city's pursuit of membership in the Main Street Ohio program. I am confident that there will be good news for Kent when new "member cities" are announced next month.

Whether or not that happens, we need to find ways to make Kent the kind of vibrant, student-friendly college town that is synonymous with cities like Ann Arbor and Ithaca — cities that are economically vibrant, that foster student success and are known for academic excellence. You see, I think that these are all tied together.

There are thousands of students, employees and visitors who are ready, willing, and able to spend their money. The bad news: They are not spending enough of it here.

We must find ways to make our downtown a shopping, dining and entertainment Mecca — the kind that currently draws students and employees to places like Hudson and Tremont.

I'm not suggesting that our wonderful city change its unique character. I'm not suggesting that we seek more "big box" stores like Wal-Mart and more fast food franchises. And I'm not suggesting that we pursue an economic revival for the sake of money alone.

What I am suggesting is a need — a responsibility — to create new connections between students and the town they call home for several years.

As students become more connected to their college town, they are not only valuable as consumers, but also as contributors and responsible citizens.

Students who feel at home give blood to the Red Cross; become Big Brothers and Sisters; volunteer at the battered women's shelter; tutor children with learning disabilities; and run errands for senior citizens.

And although there will always be regrettable exceptions, students who feel truly connected to their college town are considerate neighbors.

As part of my personal responsibility as president, I will support the city's economic development efforts in every way possible. I will remain active on the regional development front. And I will continue to support a range of activities that can be classified as "academic entrepreneurship."

The final paragraphs illustrate the university's commitment to regional well-being and personal responsibility, and again evoke a spirit of excellence.

In short, Kent State will continue to play a major role in enhancing the quality of life for all Kent residents. I consider this part of my personal responsibility because I'm deeply committed to the two principles that I articulated just a few minutes ago — academic excellence and student success. At the beginning of each day and at the end of each day I remind myself what my responsibility is to the people of Ohio, and that is to ensure that our students are successful, that they can live fulfilled lives. As an educator, I believe that this begins with academic excellence.

And as part of the Jeffersonian view of responsibility, as a leader of Kent State, I will continue to work as a partner with the city we have called home for nearly a century because it is a place of academic excellence, of student success, and is a point of pride for everyone who calls Kent home. It is our collective responsibility.

Thank you, everyone. Have a good morning, and a great day.

**Remarks have been abbreviated for the purposes of this illustration and may have been altered as the speech was actually delivered.*

Making the most of your speech or presentation

You can reach many important opinion leaders by giving a speech, but it need not stop there. Proactively coordinate publicity with the organization hosting you; suggest they work with you to generate coverage that will be of mutual benefit. This might include:

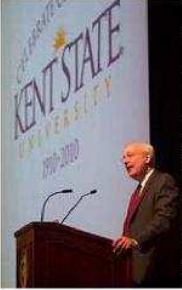
- In advance of the speech, send a brief media advisory about the presentation — who, what, where, when and why they should be interested.
- The day of the presentation, distribute a news release with bulleted key points of the speech, along with the full text, to the media.
- Distribute reprints or copies of your speech to targeted newsletters and Web sites.
- If there is an opportunity for interviews, either at the speech location or by telephone, offer to be available for this.

Taking these extra steps increases the possibility that key excerpts from the speech will reach additional audiences, multiplying the impact of the time you have spent preparing for and delivering your remarks.

At the right is an example of a story that ran in the *Record-Courier* the day after President Lester A. Lefton's presentation at the fall 2006 Bowman Breakfast.

Lefton shares vision of a vibrant Kent Record crowd at Bowman Breakfast hears KSU chief


David O'Brien
November 3, 2006



By Dave O'Brien
Record-Courier staff writer

Fifteen years ago, Ohio college students could count on the state funding fully half their secondary education. Today, it is more like one-third, and too many of those students are simply not completing their college degrees, meaning they cannot compete in the workplace.

Only 23 percent of Kent State University's budget is fronted by the state, forcing the university to turn to private donors for student scholarship funds, grants and research money. There is an exodus of manufacturers, businesses, workers and people ages 18 to 40 from the state.



The solution to those problems, KSU President Lester Lefton told a record crowd of about 400 at Thursday's Bowman Breakfast, is to ensure academic excellence, personal responsibility and "be at the forefront of every single thing that we do."

Lefton, the keynote speaker for the fall breakfast, a town-and-gown tradition in Kent since 1963 sponsored by KSU and the Kent Area Chamber of Commerce, also called for increased cooperation between the city and the university.

On the city side, increased economic development in cooperation with the university, along with a "first-class hotel and conference center" would help "ensure Kent is a vibrant, student-friendly college town ... shopping, dining and entertainment mecca," he said.

He solicited the community's help in "setting a moral tone for our students" and encouraging responsible citizenship by letting them know that drunk driving, cheating and other preventable offenses will affect their future lives.

Lefton said KSU has a "standing responsibility" to create good citizens who can compete for position, status and careers in the new global society, and expressed a desire to "build on the mutual links between Kent, Kent State and the chamber."

"My responsibility is to ensure that our students are successful" in academics and as citizens, he said.

Practical tips for writing and giving speeches

- Determine the audience for whom the speech is intended and write with that audience in mind.
- Ask how long the speech is expected to be and whether there will be time for questions. Make it shorter rather than longer if you have the choice.
- Estimate about two minutes of non-rushed speaking per double-spaced page. Pace yourself. Develop a conversational tempo. Consider tape-recording a rehearsal and listening to your speed and tone.
- Avoid academic and professional jargon and remember that short words are easier to speak and to understand.
- Try to write one thought per sentence.
- If you have an appropriate quote that reinforces your message, use it. But don't feel you must use quotes and don't use a lot of them.
- If appropriate, add a dash or two of humor. Introductions and endings are often the easiest places to do so.
- Read the speech aloud, changing any words or phrases that may be tongue twisters.
- Always check the pronunciations of any names in a speech and include a phonetic pronunciation in the text.
- Know the size of your expected audience and bring handouts accordingly, if handouts are being used.
- If possible, rehearse in the room you'll actually use. You'll feel more comfortable when you present your material.
- If you intend to use audio-visual equipment, check — and double-check — any necessary arrangements. Ideally, do an advance run-through.
- Prepare for questions. If you don't know the answer to a question, don't guess. Write the question down and answer it fully the next day, either with a note or a phone call.
- If you will be introduced, provide a brief list of career highlights (in bullet format), rather than your résumé.

Speech feedback/report form

Date _____

Speech given by _____

Department _____

Speech given to _____

Location _____ **Audience size** _____

Main focus of speech _____

Success stories included _____

Audience reaction/questions/comments _____

Any other information? _____

Return to:

**University Communications and Marketing
160 Administrative Services Building
330-672-2727 • Fax 330-672-2047 • e-mail: info@kent.edu**

Using slides successfully

- Make one point per slide.

If you put 10 points on a slide, your audience is going to jump ahead of you. Slides enable you to focus the attention of your audience on a single thought or idea.

- Limit the number of words on a slide to 12 or fewer.

Slides should be regarded as billboards. They are not pages of text.

- Make your words as big as your ideas.

With 12 words or less per slide, you can give your words some size. They'll be easier to read, and they'll look important.

- Slides are not substitutes for scripts.

Do not read slides as they appear. Slides should trigger your thoughts.

- Vary the content of your slides.

Don't make every slide look the same. Use words, charts, simple graphs, cartoons or photographs to make your point.

- Simplify charts and graphs.

Long rows of figures and statistically overpowering graphs are turn-offs for most audiences.

- Don't assume you need to label or title each slide.

Slides are a visual medium supported by an oral presentation. After all, a picture is worth a thousand words.

- Give every slide a focal point.

Cluttered slides discourage interest. The disciplines of good layout apply in slide design, as well as in advertisements.

- Select the best orientation for each slide.

If you're showing a spread, use a horizontal slide. If you're showing a page, use a vertical slide.

- Use color appropriately.

Color for color's sake is an extravagance. Use color sparingly, for emphasis, not ornamentation.

- Operate the slides yourself.

This gives you the absolute freedom to say exactly what you want to say about each slide, before moving on to the next.

- Don't leave a slide on the screen after you have discussed it. The visual should always correspond to what you are saying.
- Check your slides yourself. Know the slides are in proper order — and not upside down or backwards.
- Rehearse with everything exactly as it will be. Say every word. Make every move. Don't leave anything to chance. This is the most important and most often violated principle of persuasive presentation.