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# The National Student Exchange Program at the University of Kentucky, 2009 – 2012: A Review sponsored by the Division of Undergraduate Education for the Associate Deans of Curriculum and Instruction in the Undergraduate Colleges at the University of Kentucky, May 15, 2012

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# The National Student Exchange Program at the University of Kentucky 2009 – 2012

A Review sponsored by the  
Division of Undergraduate Education  
for the  
Associate Deans of Curriculum and  
Instruction in the Undergraduate  
Colleges at the University of Kentucky  
May 15, 2012

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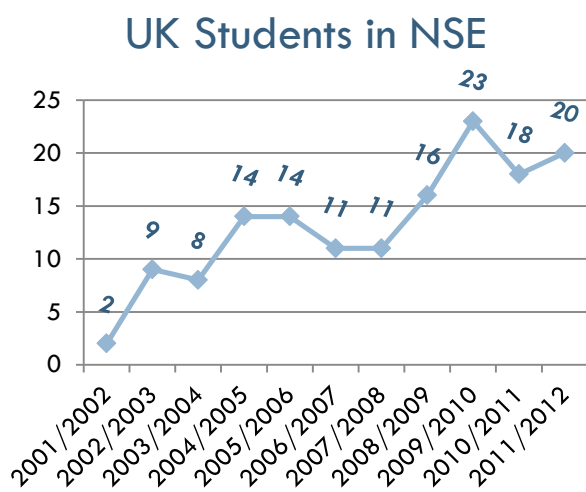
## STEPPING OUT, NOT STOPPING OUT

### 1. UK STUDENT SUCCESS

For decades undergraduate students at the University of Kentucky have benefited from the continued desire to improve the campus life and academic programming that makes UK the flagship institution in the state of Kentucky. In 2000, the Dean of Undergraduate Studies sought to offer a greater array of alternatives for academic enrichment, and the University became a member of the consortium of postsecondary institutions offering the National Student Exchange (NSE) Program.

Today the NSE Program is coordinated by a staff member in Undergraduate Studies, a unit of the Division of Undergraduate Education (UGE), and is an important strategic effort to support retention and student success. As the chart above shows, not many students at UK overall have used the consortium, but the number of participants rose dramatically when a professional staff advisor was assigned to focus primarily on recruiting and mentoring student participants.

FIGURE 1. PARTICIPATION IN NSE SINCE 2001



All four strategic goals for UGE relate directly to the purpose of the National Student Exchange Program at UK:

1. Enhance success for students in transition.
2. Ensure continued student success toward degree attainment.
3. Provide enriching educational programs for all students.
4. Ensure the quality of undergraduate academic programs.

The National Student Exchange Program in particular is identified in the UGE Strategic Plan “as a way to expand and enrich student majors as well as deepen their lifelong learning skills

(*UGE 2009-2014 Strategic Plan*, Strategy 3.1.4).”

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## **2. ABOUT THE NSE**

The National Student Exchange (NSE) is a not-for-profit, membership consortium of accredited, four-year colleges and universities in the United States, its territories, and Canada. The members of the consortium share their educational resources and exchange students offering tuition reciprocity,

NSE provides access to a wide array of courses and programs; field experiences, co-op, and internship options; and resident assistant, honors, and study abroad experiences. Students who participate in the NSE Program have the opportunity to grow academically and personally. Students can develop a greater appreciation of people and cultures. The purpose of the consortium matches well with the mission of the University. As Kentucky's flagship institution, the University plays a critical leadership role by promoting diversity, inclusion, economic development, and human well-being.

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## **3. UK STUDENTS IN NSE SCHOOLS**

Since 2001, the University has offered access to this well-respected consortium of nearly 200

four-year colleges and universities in the U.S., Guam, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, and Canada. The academic work completed in this exchange program is evaluated and approved for transfer to UK by the student's faculty advisor in the major before the student attends the NSE partner institution.

Between Fall 2009 and Spring 2012, UK sent 56 students to NSE partner schools. They attended 34 different campuses in 20 different states and territories. The most visited state was California and the most visited campus was California State University, San Bernardino. The second most visited location was Puerto Rico.

For the University of Kentucky, the NSE is a valuable component of the upper-level academic programming. The courses offered at other institutions work well within many of UK students' plan of study in order to graduate in a timely manner.

As shown in **Figure 2** below, planning for NSE might start as early as the first year at UK and some took advantage of the enriching experiences in their sophomore year. However, the majority of the UK students who chose to study at NSE partner institutions were juniors and seniors.

**FIGURE 2. COHORT CLASSIFICATION**

Student classification while on exchange	Number of UK Students
Sophomores	19
Juniors	20
Seniors	17

The students came from many different parts of the UK campus, as demonstrated in the table below:

**FIGURE 3. PARTICIPATION BY UK COLLEGES, FALL 2009 - SPRING 2012**

Undergraduate College	Number of UK Students
Arts & Sciences	24
Communication & Info Studies	7
Agriculture	6
Business & Economics	6
Education	3
Engineering	3
Fine Arts	3
Social Work	2
Nursing	1
Undergraduate Studies	1

A review of the transcripts of all the students revealed that the students are following an advisable career path and that there was a clear correlation between NSE and student academic success, including time to degree. The following

table describes the academic progress of the students who took advantage of the NSE Program during the period in review.

**FIGURE 4. GRADUATION RATES OF UK PARTICIPANTS IN NSE, FALL 2009 - SPRING 2012**

Academic Status	Number of Students	Percent Cohort
Currently enrolled at UK	19	34%
Graduated in 3.5 years	1	2%
Graduated in 4 years	12	21%
Graduated in 4.5 years	6	11%
Graduated in 5 years	8	14%
Will graduate in 4.5 years	3	5%
Will graduate in 6.5 years	1	2%
Not enrolled and not yet graduated from UK	6	11%

Students perceive their experience as enriching and successful. In a survey sent out to the current UK NSE participants in 2012, students were asked to respond to 10 questions regarding their perception of their exchange experience. These questions were based on information they submitted in their original application to the program. The following quotations offer a sampling of those aspects that the students perceive as the most important outcomes they got from the NSE Program.

**From a Spanish major who attended a university in Puerto Rico:**

*"I learned a lot about myself on my exchange program. Meeting new people helped me work on my interpersonal communication and interactions particularly in Spanish. I also reconsidered how I would incorporate knowledge from my experience into my future endeavors in life."*

**From a student who has not yet declared a major at UK (from Undergraduate Studies) and attended a university in California:**

*"I've never been so far away from my family before so through this experience I was able to become more independent and not count on really anyone but myself to get through some tough situations life threw at me."*

**From an Education major who attended a university in Tennessee:**

*"Personally I met a lot of people that I felt I would've never encountered at UK and interacting with them for a semester really helped me to learn a lot about myself. I was able to learn a lot about my culture, being at an HBCU I was around a lot of African Americans, a lot more than I'm used to being at UK. The culture and expression there was unbelievable and it definitely made for an experience I'll never forget."*

Sometimes this population is overlooked regarding their impact on the University of Kentucky. These students contribute to the diversity and overall mission of the University. They bring their unique culture, ideals, and attitudes. They positively impact the lives of fellow UK students and many return to the state after completing a degree at their home campus.

Some parting words from a very satisfied student from Florida demonstrate the impact UK has on our incoming NSE students, even if visiting for only a single semester.

**From a Florida International University student who studied at UK via the NSE Program:**

*"The spring semester has finally come to an end and I am extremely sad about leaving UK. I can honestly say I have fallen in love with UK and I don't want to leave! I wish I had the opportunity to continue to be a wildcat and graduate from such a wonderful institution but unfortunately I can't. I enjoyed every minute I spent at this school. I met so many people and made some friendships that I know will last for years to come. Thank you Kelly for helping me with the process of coming to UK! I hope to be back in Lexington soon, but until then I'll say good bye and thanks again! GO CATS!!!"*

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## **4. UK AS A HOST INSTITUTION**

In the three academic years spanning 2009 - 2012, UK hosted 32 students from NSE member campuses. Students came from 24 different states and territories. Indiana, New Mexico and Puerto Rico tied for the most incoming students during the period between Fall 2009 and Spring 2012.

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## 5. NSE AND THE UK MISSION

In a meeting on May 19, 2012, with the academic associate deans of all the University's undergraduate colleges, the Undergraduate Studies staff presented the above information. The consensus among those faculty leaders was that the NSE Program at the University of Kentucky was an asset to the University's strategic goals to offer an enriching academic experience and to improve UK's graduation rates.

The faculty also took note of the small number of students who chose to participate in this program and encouraged the Division of Undergraduate Education to advertise this opportunity more aggressively. This includes getting the information about the UK NSE Coordinator and her services out to all parts of campus so that when a student is planning to transfer out of UK to find an alternative major not offered at UK, that the student is offered this very successful alternative.

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