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Federal lab to boost K-State 2025 initiative

As the National Bio and Agro-defense Facility building rises, so will Kansas State University's reputation.

The \$650 million federal facility, set to open in 2016 at the northern edge of campus, will play an important role in K-State President Kirk Schulz's goal to become a top 50 public research university by 2025. The Department of Homeland Security lab, which develops vaccines and countermeasures for diseases threatening animals, will attract some of the world's top animal health researchers, lead to more collaboration among scientists regionally and nationally, and help K-State meet the standards to become a top 50 public research university.

Schulz's K-State 2025 vision is an aggressive plan to boost the university's stature among the country's most distinguished and respected universities in the next 15 years.

"The arrival of NBAF will help bolster K-State's prestige and standing," Schulz said. "It's critical that we take advantage of this opportunity to further strengthen the university's reputation as we become a top 50 public research university."

The rankings — and more important, the data backing them — will assist in the recruitment and retention of top students, faculty and staff, and they will help students applying for jobs and graduate schools, doctoral students searching for careers as researchers, and faculty members competing for research funding, Schulz said.

Schulz and April Mason, provost and senior vice president, along with members of the president's cabinet, chose eight categories to measure progress and determine K-State's current ranking. In most categories K-State ranks between 80 and 90 in comparison to other public research universities, which means K-State will have to climb roughly 35 spots against other schools also trying to increase their rankings. Categories include:

- Total research and development expenditures
- Total endowment
- Number of national academy members
- Number of faculty awards (as defined by the Center for Measuring University Performance at Arizona State University)
- Number of doctorates granted annually
- Freshman-to-sophomore retention rate
- Six-year graduation rate
- Percent of undergraduate students involved in research

NBAF will boost K-State's research efforts, a key factor in the 2025 initiative, said Ron Trewyn, K-State's vice president for research. The facility could also increase research dollars by attracting more scientists to Manhattan.

"It will allow us to grow our expertise in the food science and animal research realm, and in turn, that will grow our funding dollars from the National Institutes of Health, National Science Foundation and other federal agencies," he said.

"This kind of facility right next to us gives us an opportunity for collaboration and partnership that isn't possible without that proximity. A lab many states away can be a collaborator, but NBAF being right here at K-State will make it that much more accessible and available for collaboration."

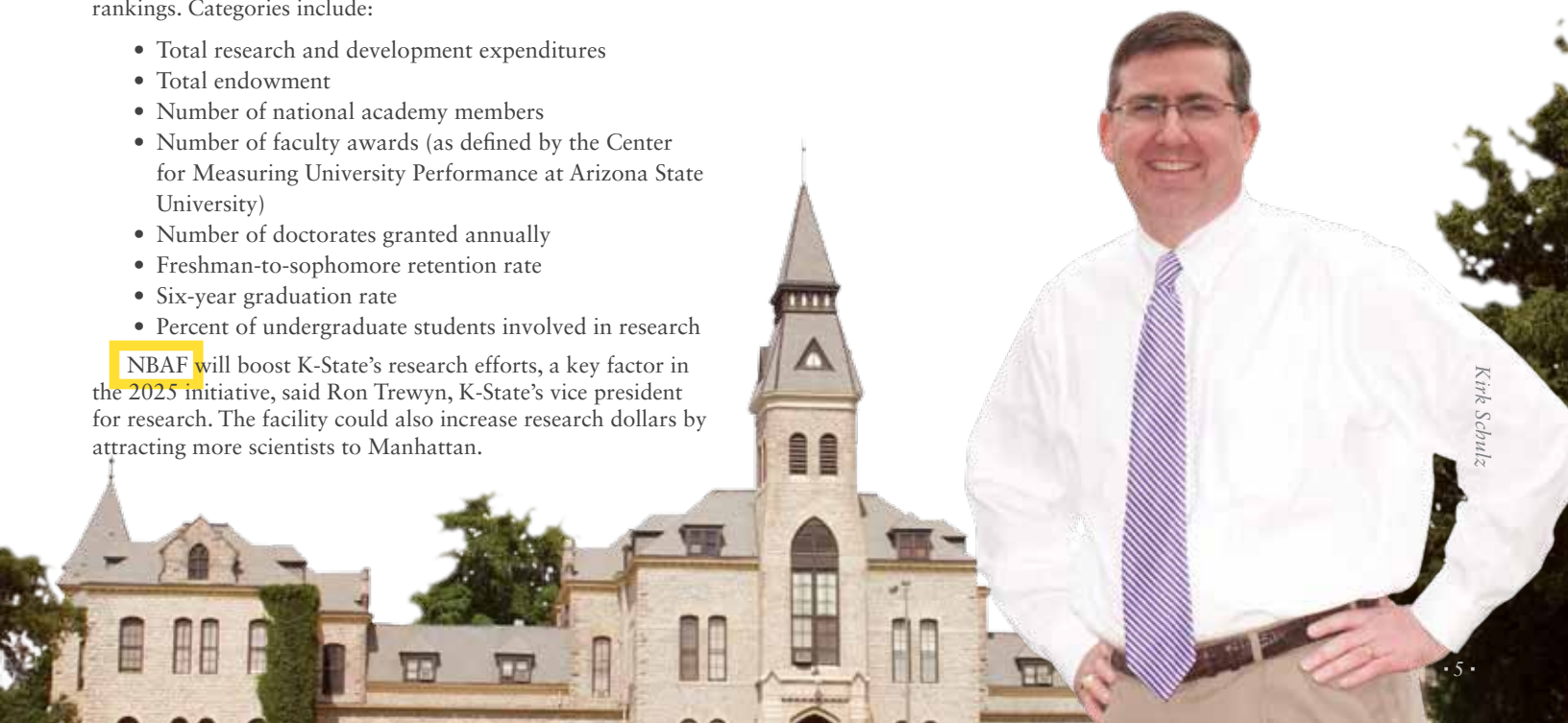
Faculty will also be able to partner with NBAF researchers, Mason said.

"Faculty are always looking for ways that they can be enriched with different lab facilities and various viewpoints from different colleagues," Mason said. "None of us operate in a vacuum; we need colleagues and others around us with whom we can collaborate, write, discuss and conduct research."

Although NBAF's opening is several years away, the process to bring the federal lab to Manhattan puts K-State in the national spotlight. The Department of Homeland Security wanted to build the lab in an area with high levels of research, and K-State is known for its expertise in livestock medicine, food science and infectious diseases.

"NBAF's location really builds on K-State's strengths of animal health and food science research, and we wouldn't have been competitive for NBAF if we didn't already have those assets," Trewyn said. "In short, NBAF will solidify K-State as the world's animal health research center."

By Trevor Davis, Communications and Marketing



Kirk Schulz