

## PROFILE

- 22,000+ total students on four campuses worldwide
- 250+ academic undergraduate majors and programs
- 87.1% freshman-to-sophomore retention rate

## CHALLENGE

- Help Kansas State University (K-State) students feel a sense of belonging and that their unique needs matter, especially during a pandemic
- Increase student success and retention, especially between freshmen and sophomore years, using student data from research-based assessments
- Enhance faculty and academic advisor capacity to advise students with career decision needs
- Identify and gain deeper insights into student career decision needs, at first year and later during post-graduation planning
- Integrate data-based tools to determine and deliver appropriate individualized student support services
- Continuously monitor and adjust Career Center services and performance, based, in part, on students' career decision assessment data

## SOLUTION

In Fall 2019 and Fall 2020, with nearly 1,000 students, K-State faculty and advisors used Career Key's Career Decision Profile across 4 programs:

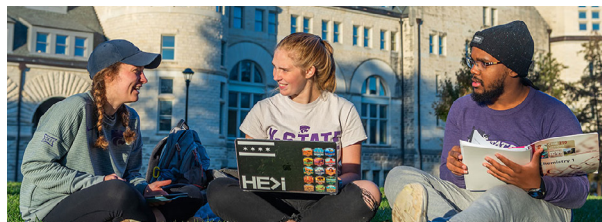
- K-State First (FYE),
- College of Architecture,
- College of Arts & Sciences > Biology Division, and
- Career Center Career Exploration classes

## RESULTS

- Using Career Decision Profile data and insights, K-State faculty and advisors were able to follow up with individualized, tailored support for their students. It has strengthened and expanded their ability to provide earlier and more meaningful "Now What" intervention for students who may be undecided, uncomfortable about their choice of a major, or unmoored by unanticipated graduate school admission decisions.
- K-State's freshman-to-sophomore retention is up 2.3% to a record 87.1%. Student retention rate is up 7% since the university put plans into place to reach a 90% retention rate by 2025. The Career Decision Profile is one of K-State's recent investments in student success.

Founded in 1863, Kansas State University is the nation's first operational land grant university. With student population topping 22,000, K-State has invested significant time and resources to offer students world class career planning and support services. Career Exploration is a key component of the program. Students can take self-guided career assessments, university-sponsored classes in Academic and Career Decisions, and access a comprehensive portfolio of support services, including personalized advising, help with resumes, preparations for jobs and internships, interview skills, career fairs and more.

In 2019, K-State's Career Center began using a new online career readiness assessment from Career Key, the Career Decision Profile (CDP).



**“Our increases in student retention and graduation rates are strong. They underscore that our first-year student success programs and overall student-first approaches help keep students at K-State.”**

- Jeannie Brown Leonard,  
Vice Provost for Student Success,  
Kansas State University

K-State reports its most significant growth is in its student retention and graduation rates. University representatives noted that freshman-to-sophomore retention is up 2.3%, reaching a record 87.1%. Student retention rate is up 7% since the university put plans into place to reach a 90% retention rate by 2025.

This short inventory gives students and advisors a snapshot of where students are on their career decision journey and of how they feel about their status including:

- How decided a student is about careers
- How comfortable students are with where they are in their career decision process
- Their career decision needs, barriers and what they'd like to do next

First, K-State studied the efficacy of the CDP with students in the university's Open Option Program, a program created to support freshmen and sophomores who had not yet decided on a major. K-State then introduced the CDP for students enrolled in career exploration classes and students enrolled as biology majors, architecture majors, and participants in the University's First Year Experience program.

## Objectives Met & Exceeded

Jared Meitler, K-State Senior Assistant Director, Career Exploration explained, "Our focus is making sure students are career-ready, comfortable and confident about their academic decisions and career direction. Equally important, we are here to support students and offer both guidance and resources to help them make their best decisions. Using the results of Career Key's Career Decision Profile, we now have data to help us identify students who need more in-depth support.

We learn more about the students from profile data and their answers to questions about barriers they're facing and information they want us to know about them. The bottom line for us is that our mandate is to intervene earlier, meaningfully, and skillfully...for those students who need a more individualized intervention. The CDP gives us the data we need to meet that mandate successfully." Meitler also noted that the CDP's reporting tools enable the K-State Career Center's team to create a holistic, individualized connection with students.

*Jared Meitler of K-State's Career Center created a short video and landing page to help students access, take and understand the purpose and benefits of taking Career Key's Career Decision Profile inventory.*

## Insight Beyond the Numbers

K-State's Jared Meitler explained that students' unique responses to the CDP's open-ended invitation to share "Other Factors" impacting them gave the Career Center's counselors qualitative data to customize their outreach. For example, several common themes in student concerns emerged:

- Well-being: anxiety, lack of confidence, depression, isolation, stress
- Perfectionism, fear of making a mistake
- Financial insecurity
- Lack of support system - Far from home, balancing a job with classwork, parental responsibilities
- Meaning - looking for how to make a difference

**“The bottom line for us is that our mandate is to intervene earlier, meaningfully, and skillfully...for those students who need a more individualized intervention. The CDP gives us the data we need to meet that mandate successfully.”**

- Jared Meitler, Assistant Director, Career Exploration, Kansas State University

**“Data we've analyzed from the CDP shows us quantitatively that students' comfort levels with their career decision processes connects directly to their sense of belonging and identity within our university community... and those factors are pivotal in student persistence and retention.”**

### Career Key

The Career Key career decision platform helps students make better, more confident career and education decisions. Education administrators, advisors and researchers get a complete picture of students' personality types, preferred careers and majors, and their career decision needs. Career Key offers the only online career readiness assessment, the Career Decision Profile. The platform combination of research-based inventories, Career Decision Profile and Career Key Discovery, a unique Holland-based assessment, provide all the diagnostic data and insights to effectively target and evaluate student advising and success interventions. Secondary schools and higher education institutions have trusted Career Key for 20+ years.

**Career Key** 

**Career Key**  
**www.careerkey.org**  
**julietjones@careerkey.org**  
**206 850-6195**