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When the nineties dawned, numerous omens indicated that Kent, along with all of higher education, was heading into dangerous waters. With state support continuing to drop, it was clear that the school must shore up its external support systems and build new ones, while making internal adjustments to the inchoate forces that were reshaping the national ethos. Against this backdrop, the Trustees took a significant departure from tradition. They chose as Kent's tenth president Carol A. Cartwright, vice chancellor for Academic Affairs at the University of California-Davis. She was the first woman to head one of Ohio's state universities. Cartwright had a keen, orderly mind and a richly intense, highly disciplined temperament behind a calm, self-possessed demeanor. A cool-headed realist, she was careful in preparation, measured and prudent in response. She had notable powers of concentration and application, and the pitch and tone of her mind were keyed to her astute sense of the moment, as her voice was to the many constituencies she addressed so tirelessly and effectively. Her forward-looking stance was expressed in the watchword of her administration: "We are not interested in following. We intend to lead." To do this, she recognized, meant the school must cope with the state's increasing demand for accountability along with its decreasing financial support.

Cartwright's mettle was tested early. Even as she was settling into the president's chair, the governor announced the first in a series of steep cuts in funding for higher education. Then the Board of Regents floated a plan to make OSU and the University of Cincinnati the premier doctoral-granting institutions, relegating Kent and the other northern schools to "second-tier" status. She handled these crises with quiet aplomb, as she did the Regent's cut-backs, four years later, in the doctoral programs of Kent and other northern schools. In her first four years Kent took a giant step up the ladder of national prestige when it won the status of "Research University II" and became an active participant in the Pew Roundtable and the Peabody Teaching Project sponsored by the American Association for Higher Education. Internally, her initiatives included the school's most ambitious scholarship effort—the Founders Scholars Program; the Learning and Technologies Center in renovated Moulton Hall, where students could learn on real-time telecommunications linkups using state-of-the-art technologies; and a redefinition of teaching in order to recognize and reward its many-faceted nature and its centrality to scholarship.

In 1997 Cartwright unveiled two major programs: a new campus master plan and Kent's first capital campaign to give the school the ballast of financial reserves every institution must have normally in a time of instability and change. These programs were designed to enable the school to sail steadily ahead against the turbulent and unpredictable currents generated by such massive forces as the expanding global economy and the industrial technological revolution. Complicating their effectiveness was a shift in the nation's attitude, a rejection of the communitarianism, in which public education depends, in favor of individualism and market values. As the end of the century and of the millennium loomed, these forces, it was clear, would present higher education with a bracing promise—to give it greater importance and value than ever before; and a sobering challenge—at what cost? That is, how was it to serve the skills-oriented, utilitarian vocationalism demanded by the global economy while cleaving to its ancient mission of



The Ameritech Classroom in the Moulton Hall Learning Technologies Center electronically links the University's eight campuses to each other and to schools, communities, and corporations worldwide.



Carol A. Cartwright, the University's tenth president, was inducted into the Ohio Women's Hall of Fame, one of many honors she has received during her tenure at Kent.



preparing the whole person for a life devoted to something higher than self and profit? The state picture was especially problematic. By the midnineties Ohio ranked forty-first among the states in support of education and, for the first time, its contribution to the cost of educating university students fell below 50 percent, as funds were increasingly diverted to prison-building. The clear signal from Columbus—from state government and the Board of Regents—was that Kent would have to do “more with less”—provide more quality education and training, while being “more accountable” to the state, despite diminishing state support.



Images of today's students reflect the evolution of styles and demographics that has transformed America's campuses since Kent's founding, but the excitement and challenges of higher education and the personal and shared joy of accomplishment remain constant.



Despite the formidable challenges ahead, the future of Kent State University is promising. For one thing, as institutions are measured in years, Kent has just entered middle age, with all its disciplined vigor and mature sense of self-command and self-identity. And then there is the persuasive witness of its singular history of struggle. This history testifies to its inner, tensile strength, its remarkable capacity to cope with adversities of every sort—even a national tragedy of the dimensions of May 4, 1970: to struggle not only to endure, but to triumph over them by creatively converting them into its expansive historic mission. No one has spoken more eloquently of that mission than its founder, John Edward McGilvrey. In his “farewell message” to students, in 1926, he reminded them of education’s power for “intellectual and moral quickening” and of the “moving power of ideals.” He then summoned them to the struggle: “A fight for the better thing is always worth while,” he said, and “the spirit of the struggle lives on in the lives of thousands of Kent State students.” Today that spirit lives on in the lives of hundreds of thousands whose spirits have been quickened immeasurably by Kent State University.





