

Heart of a Tiger: Philanthropy and Wooster Society at FHSU

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By Tisa Mason

HAYS, Kan. - Growing up as the daughter of a barber and a bus driver, I couldn't have imagined that one day, I would be the President of Fort Hays State University. I was a first-generation college student — underfunded and underprepared. However, I had faith in my dreams. I had an on-campus job to help pay my bills but relied on the generosity of donors to reach my goals. Knowing I had strangers who believed in me and contributed to my success pushed me to be the best version of myself.

Whenever I meet students at Fort Hays State, thanks to the generosity of the philanthropists who support our students, I see a young version of myself in them. I know firsthand how donors can change the trajectory of a student's life. The power of philanthropy and planned giving is evident in its transformative impact on the lives of individuals pursuing higher education, especially those facing financial obstacles.

My journey was shaped by the kindness and faith of strangers who contributed to my success. Their support, combined with my dedication and determination, laid the foundation for the person I am today. Recognizing the profound impact financial assistance can have on a student's life, I included FHSU in my estate plans.

As I reflect on my life and the impact Fort Hays State University has had on it, I am filled with gratitude and a sense of purpose. I genuinely believe in the value and potential of this university and our hardworking students. It brings me great joy to think about the lasting impact my legacy will have.

The stories of individuals like myself, Ed and Mary Hammond, and the other members of our Wooster Society highlight the impact that philanthropy and planned giving can have on the lives of students at Fort Hays State University. These stories remind us of the importance of supporting higher education and investing in the future of our community.

The creation of scholarships and endowed funds not only provides financial assistance to students but also honors the legacies of loved ones and inspires others to give back. Through the Wooster Society, individuals have the opportunity to leave a lasting impact on FHSU and the community as a whole.

As members of the Wooster Society, we have the privilege of supporting students in various ways, ranging from scholarships to academic departments to strategic initiatives, buildings, research, athletics, and so much more. The seamless and impactful guidance provided by the FHSU Foundation ensures that estate and planned gifts will have a meaningful and enduring impact on the university and its students.

Donating to a university can provide tax benefits and establish a lasting legacy that honors your generosity and commitment to education.

I encourage individuals with a strong personal connection to FHSU, including alums or family members who attended school here, to consider establishing an estate gift to support a person or program that has impacted their lives.

This personal connection is my favorite reason. I have enjoyed getting to know the students who benefited from Bill's and my philanthropy. I know several of our philanthropists who have thoughtfully fostered ongoing relationships with the students and the programs that benefitted from their philanthropy. I also love hearing stories from our philanthropists about why they "paid it forward" and who they honored through their gifts. The stories are remarkable!

Membership in the Wooster Society is not determined by a specific monetary benchmark but by including FHSU in your will, trust, or other beneficiary designations. The legacy of generosity and support that the Hammonds and other members of the Wooster Society are creating at FHSU will have a lasting impact on future generations, inspiring a culture of giving and investment in education. Their dedication to the university and their community inspires us all, reminding us of the power of philanthropy and the importance of investing in education.

I urge anyone touched by the mission and values of Fort Hays State University to consider joining the Wooster Society and including FHSU in their estate plans. By doing so, you will play a crucial role in shaping the future of our university and empowering students to achieve their dreams.

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