

# Heart of a Tiger: The unmatched value of an FHSU education

9/1/23 local

By Tisa Mason

HAYS, Kan. – From the high plains of north-central Kansas, Fort Hays State University offers exceptional, proven academic quality at an unmatched price. We know the journey to success begins with accessibility—so we give students an education that empowers their future without the burden of high tuition. That’s a promise no one else can match, and that, we believe, makes FHSU the best value in higher education anywhere.

We unlock the untapped potential of students by offering a robust education at a price that will not be a financial burden. Go ahead and compare tuition. We’re proud to say that attending FHSU costs about 50% less than the national average for nearly every student. This academic year, the national average for tuition and fees for a full-time undergraduate student is \$10,423; for the public universities in Kansas, \$8,543; and for FHSU, \$5,634.

But let’s go a little deeper. The Foundation for Research on Equal Opportunity (FREEOPP.org) set out to provide a meaningful way to evaluate universities. Preston Cooper, a research fellow at the non-profit organization, determined the College Scorecard data from the U.S. Department of Education, which provides earnings results for those students receiving federal financial aid from over 30,000 bachelor’s degree programs at U.S. colleges and universities, would be a great place to start.

Cooper then supplemented the Scorecard results with information from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) and the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY) to ultimately derive what he labels “Lifetime Return on Investment” or more frequently referred to as ROI in financial circles.

ROI is defined as the present value of lifetime earnings with a college degree minus the present discounted value of counterfactual earnings (the amount that the same student would have earned over the course of her life had she not gone to college), minus the cost of tuition, required fees, books, and equipment.

This process allows for comparison across universities and programs within the same university. It also helps students answer the question: Will this credential lead to a better-paying job than my alternative?

So, how does FHSU stack up regarding its programs and overall? That’s where our “value” story really starts to shine.

Across the 27 bachelor programs evaluated in the research, every Fort Hays State University program provided a positive return on investment!

To provide some context on that result, roughly 30 percent of bachelor programs across the 30,000 programs studied return a negative ROI, so having **no programs** with a negative ROI, regardless of the program of study, is quite impressive.

From a state of Kansas perspective, FHSU is the only public state university with all programs indicating a positive ROI, with Washburn University being the only other public state university to match that feat. Across all 27 programs in the study, FHSU observes an average weighted ROI of just north of \$400,000!

Not only are these results life-changing, but the state of Kansas, which is ultimately the home to a large majority of these graduates, also reaps an outsized benefit.

As the study utilized graduates from 2015 through 2017, an additional level of insight provided involves the impact on the value-added earnings of graduates in the communities where they live and work.

Looking across the 27 programs evaluated at FHSU, the cumulative lifetime ROI programs provided an economic impact of more than \$1.1 billion from the students who graduated during the study period.

As some programs may graduate fewer students than others while still providing higher levels of ROI, the researcher also looked at what he called the “Most Valuable Players (MVP)” to provide additional context to the programs that show an outsized community economic impact on ROI.

For FHSU, our MVPs included Registered Nursing, Nursing Administration, Nursing Research and Clinical Nursing (\$263 million); Liberal Arts and Sciences, General Studies and Humanities (\$177 million); and Teacher Education and Professional Development, Specific Levels and Methods (\$99 million).

Our Liberal Arts degree was called out by name in FREEOPP.org’s ‘Ranking the 50 State Public University Systems on Prices & Outcomes’ report as *“unexpectedly valuable degrees abound in the Sunflower State: Fort Hays State University offers a liberal arts degree worth \$234,000.”*

We are proud to say all our programs evaluated in the study provide students with a positive lifetime ROI. Our three highest ROI programs are Management Information Systems, Registered Nursing, Nursing Administration, Nursing Research and Clinical Nursing, and Business.

FHSU offers a world-class higher education experience at an unbeatable price, with a lifetime positive return on investment for our graduates and numerous intangible benefits to the Kansas communities where our outstanding alumni live and serve. No matter how you slice the data in this independent study, the value of Fort Hays State University shines through, highlighting one more reason why we are proud to say we are the best value in education anywhere.

– end –