

Heart of the Tiger: Sharing innovative projects

7/6/23

By Tisa Mason

HAYS, Kan. - *We think big. We solve problems. We seek and confront challenges and embrace strategic risks that turn great ideas into exceptional pathways.* These are the descriptors of our core values, innovation, and entrepreneurship. I am so inspired by my colleagues who embody our innovative spirit, and I am pleased to share a couple of projects.

Tourism & Hospitality Management Degree in Three: Tourism and Hospitality Management. Dr. Stacey Smith and Dr. Karen Thal are delivering a specific plan of study that promotes a three-year degree in tourism and hospitality management. A three-year bachelor's degree option accelerates the traditional undergraduate process. With an academically rigorous schedule, students save time and reach the workforce earlier while gaining the skills and experience needed for a successful career. Students are required to complete an industry internship as part of the program. So, not only will they be done in three years, but they will have completed industry work experience or an industry project.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects the U.S. economy to add 8.3 million jobs from 2021 to 2031. Of those, 1.9 million jobs—23.1 percent of all new jobs projected—are expected to be in leisure and hospitality. That is a significant projected increase for a sector that made up 8.9 percent of total employment in 2021. This rapid projected growth—the fastest of any industry, at an annual rate of 1.3 percent—results from the recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Students may start this three-year program this fall. <https://www.fhsu.edu/academic/programs/tourism-hospitality-management>

Economic Justice and Advocacy Certificate: Teaming up to lead this innovation, Dr. Rachel Dolechek and Dr. Ziwei Qi are creating a network of individuals who can actively support and advocate for survivors of gender-based violence by equipping business professionals with the necessary skills and knowledge. One of the critical areas of focus within the certificate program is financial empowerment.

Participants will learn strategies to help survivors gain financial independence and stability, such as understanding the impact of violence on economic well-being, providing resources for financial assistance, promoting financial literacy, and creating trauma-informed workplaces and accommodations. By addressing the financial barriers that survivors often face, the program helps to empower survivors and develop pathways for economic self-sufficiency.

Participants can begin the certificate program in the fall of 2023. Scholarships are available. <https://www.fhsu.edu/academic/programs/economic-justice-advocacy/certificate>.

Exercise is Medicine-On Campus (EIM-OC): Faculty from our Health and Human Performance (HHP) department, led by Dr. Emily Washburn, are creating Exercise is Medicine-On Campus, a program developed by the American College of Sports Medicine. The vision of this program is to see all campus and community members across multiple disciplines discover, share, and adopt behaviors to promote a culture of physical activity and chronic disease prevention and management.

Physical inactivity is a fast-growing public health problem and contributes to various chronic diseases and health complications. HHP professionals love creating relationships with people that facilitate positivity and joy around physical activity and movement.

By implementing EIM-OC at FHSU, we can focus more on physical activity to provide health benefits and disease prevention for all community members – faculty, staff, and students. This program will offer HHP undergraduate and graduate students first-hand experience facilitating EIM-OC program elements.

During this past year, the Division of student affairs launched WellTiges to encourage employee health and well-being. The program is designed to help people develop habits that turn into healthy choices. The multi-dimension plan focuses on nutritional, social, physical, occupational, financial, and mental health. The program has been very successful and will partner with EIM-OC as we expand employee well-being initiatives.

Interactive Learning Spaces: Imagine a virtual field trip where students can interact with the environment and each other. Dr. Nathan Riedel is working with two faculty partners, Dr. Tara Phelps-Durr, biology, and Dr. Todd Moore, geoscience, to create a digital space that allows faculty to design interactive and collaborative student learning experiences. The biology project explores mitosis (cell division), while the geoscience project focuses on the elements that create a tornado and provides ways for students to interact with and manipulate the learning content.

This project is based on our belief that the path forward for online education is bridging the gap between what's possible online and in real life. We want students to feel immersed in their learning, not viewing it from the outside. We want them to be excited about online learning experiences.

The key to this innovation is building a scalable and sustainable infrastructure so that all our faculty can easily develop their own similar class interactive experiences.

Tiger Money Mentors: Dr. Christina Glenn, finance professor, is creating Tiger Money Mentors. In this peer-financial counseling program, money-savvy students are trained to provide one-on-one financial education to students who have questions about their personal finances, as well as to provide group financial education to student organizations and classes that might benefit from training on specific financial topics, such as budgeting, student loan debt, credit cards, navigating decisions related to job offers, and making a financial plan for college and beyond. This benefits not only the students seeking counseling but also the money mentors gain experience working with clients and public speaking.

Often young adults need to be provided with the knowledge they need to manage their finances before arriving at college, and their decisions regarding saving, spending, taking on debt, and investing will impact their future significantly.

Research shows that 74% of Americans get financial advice from TikTok, YouTube, and Facebook – much of that information is inaccurate. They must have a resource to guide them in making sound financial decisions to set them up for success during and after college.

Coupled with the lack of financial knowledge, financial stress is prevalent among young adults, with finances being a significant factor in the number of credit hours a student takes each semester and even in their decision to continue college. Often students feel the need to choose between school and work, which impacts their academic success.

Beginning in the fall of 2023, Tiger Money Mentors will help students gain knowledge and skills that pertain to their unique personal finance situations and hopefully come away with a plan to reduce the financial stress and anxiety that many college students face, reduce student loan borrowing, and feel more confident about their financial future. We want students to feel empowered to take control of their financial situation and not give up on their academic goals.

Virtual Arctic Field Trip: Sternberg Museum Science Camps Director David Levering is working with Dr. Laura Wilson—geoscience professor, to create a virtual field trip to the Arctic. Students will explore an Arctic research station, modern Arctic geology, and climate science and travel back in time to explore the Arctic region as it looked millions of years ago. The time travel will allow a more direct presentation of how and why the climate has changed dramatically. The course will be available to students for the spring 2024 semester.

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