

A promising year ahead at Fort Hays State

For me, this year in particular signals surges of hopefulness and confidence in our students and the future of Fort Hays State University. That confidence is fueled by the resiliency of our students and the determination of our hardworking faculty and staff.

Every day I look out the front window of the president's residence, and I'm hopeful as I see the activity of our campus, the beauty of our grounds, and the promise of the Fischli-Wills Center for Student Success. Everything we do at FHSU is ultimately about student success; that is what drives us.

"One of the many benefits of our Center for Student Success was the idea of not only creating efficiencies by moving multiple offices in one location, but re-thinking how those services were provided," said Dr. Joey Linn, vice president for Student Affairs. "We have streamlined student support services in such a way that makes it very easy for students to receive multiple facets of assistance – all in one convenient location, connected to the Memorial Union."

The vision of the three-level center was purposeful and strategic. The first floor concentrates on inclusive academic support, such as free tutoring, professional advising, and career services. Also on the first floor is a student welcome center for prospective students – the heartbeat of our on-campus strategic enrollment plan. The second floor features student organizations and campus activities, ensuring all students understand the importance of student engagement, whether on campus or online.

"Many universities across the country have created success centers. Most have concentrated on academic support resources and student involvement opportunities," Dr. Linn said. "What sets our center apart, and makes it truly forward-thinking, is the integration of health and wellness services on the third floor."

The third floor of the success center connects all areas of student health – mind, body, and soul. From supportive counseling services and accessibility services, to convenient and affordable medical services, all focuses on the students' well-being.

As we transition to a new semester, among our new staff on campus is Dr. Jeff Curtis, medical director of the Health and Wellness Center. Although new in this role, Dr. Curtis is not new to Tiger Nation. He is an alumnus of FHSU and can be seen frequently on campus at sporting events and a myriad of other activities. He currently serves on the executive committee of the FHSU Foundation. He is also well known to the community, having served as a cardiologist and director of cardiology services at Hays Medical Center.

The hiring of Dr. Curtis is strategic. It is one of the many deliberate decisions we are making that fills me with that hopefulness and confidence. He not only brings a valuable skill set to the position but also a philosophy that is congruent with the mission of the Student Success Center.

Gina Smith, director of health and wellness, adds, "Our floor is ideal for meeting the physical and mental health needs of FHSU students. We can easily communicate and collaborate between counseling and health staff to address the comprehensive needs of our students in a timely manner. I look forward to working with Hays Medical Center to bring specialists to the

Health and Wellness Services office and to implement programming such as cooking nutritious meals on a limited budget and time-efficient ways to manage stress for a healthy lifestyle.”

Will Stutterheim, assistant director of health and wellness, shared, “we are very excited to have someone of Dr. Curtis’ caliber join our team. His connections with HaysMed are invaluable in helping us work collaboratively to provide the best care for our students. He has had many years of practice and has seen countless innovations in his time as a provider working in Kansas.”

“Our current space provides us the opportunity to have a specialist or a visiting provider,” Will added. “With Dr. Curtis’ connections to other providers and agencies in town, there is a real opportunity to expand services based on the needs of our students.”

As we strategically think about how we can better serve our students in the future, staff members are exploring the expansion of services and rethinking how to best care for our students. I look forward to learning more about new programming and potential new partnerships with local agencies.

Dr. Curtis said, “the integration of student physical and mental health services in a collaborative fashion in a single student-centered location, was a draw for me to consider this position.”

“Students are much more likely to succeed academically and socially if they are physically and mentally fit,” he said. “I can’t think of a better reason to come out of retirement. It is a great opportunity to serve our students and to give back to my alma mater.”

This center, and the focus of the staff who work there, truly encapsulates how student success and the culture of care is at the heart of this great university.

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