



FORT HAYS STATE UNIVERSITY



Para Pathway program at Fort Hays State opens up new route to teaching degree

Beginning year three of its Para Pathway program, the Department of Teacher Education at Fort Hays State University has graduated 53 people in a process established to provide opportunities for para-educators to become fully licensed teachers. Currently, another 213 are working their way through the system

Among other things, the program accomplishes the major goals of filling the shortage of teachers in K-6 schools in Kansas, especially in officially designated "underserved" districts.

Para Educators are individuals who work in K-6 schools and classrooms all over the state. They assist teachers and school administrators with tasks like making copies to working one-on-one with students in learning needed skills, to working with groups of students on lessons, assisting students with managing behavior, supervising students in tasks outside of the classroom, or performing a wide variety of other tasks.

Another important accomplishment of Para Pathways is that it keeps these para-professionals in their home communities while earning the education necessary to acquire teaching credentials.

"This program can be life changing," said Susan Renk, coordinator of the Para Pathway program at Fort Hays State.

"It allows para-educators to grow professionally while maintaining employment in their districts," she said. "Through strategic use of scholarship funds and support, we help the schools acquire

the teachers they need and improve employment opportunities for Kansas citizens."

The program, initiated in May 2016, is funded annually by the Kansas Board of Regents through its InPLACE Education Grant. The program is intended to continue as long as grant funding is available, said Renk.



An important purpose served by the grants is to provide scholarships for qualified students.

To qualify for the program, applicants must

1) be employed as a para-educator or classroom aide in a K-6 school and 2) be an elementary education major at FHSU. To be eligible for the scholarship portion of the program, the student must be a paraprofessional or classroom aide in a Kansas school and/or commit to teaching in an underserved district.

Students who complete the program graduate with a Bachelor of Science in elementary education and licensure to teach K-6. If the students add a minor in special education, said Renk, they will be able to teach pre-K-12 special education as well as K-6 regular education.

For para-educators, said Renk, there are special

Continued on back page

benefits from the program. One is that they can maintain employment while working toward a degree and licensure. Another is that they save time and money because they have the opportunity to exempt internship courses because they are working in approved K-6 educational settings.

The program benefits districts because they gain teachers who have been working in education and who are likely to stay in the field longer. They also gain teachers who are committed to their communities.

Renk, as coordinator of the program, is responsible for marketing, determining student eligibility, coordinating internship exemptions and managing the scholarship program. She is also an academic advisor to Para Pathway students as well as to other elementary education students.

"This program serves the needs of schools all over Kansas," said Renk, "and it keeps people employed while they prepare themselves for better-paying careers in a profession for which they already have

a proven affinity. After earning their degrees, they are able to stay and teach in their home communities, which provides a stable workforce for their districts."



FHSU names a chief communications officer

Scott Cason, currently the chief marketing officer at Texas A&M University-Commerce, has been announced as Fort Hays State University's news chief communications officer.

President Tisa Mason said Cason would take up his post at the end of this month.

"I look forward to the important work of advancing the Fort Hays brand, communicating the immense value of the student experiences we offer, and working with our alumni and friends to strengthen their ties to this great university," said Cason.

He will be tasked with leading the transformation of the Office of University Relations and Marketing into a more strategically focused agency.

Cason's career began in the U.S. Navy as an officer and helicopter pilot. He later led a team of Navy recruiters. He changed careers in 1993 to become a public school teacher before beginning what he calls his third career – higher education marketing – in 1999.

Cason holds a B.S. in marketing from Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, and an M.A. in teaching from Otterbein University, Westerville, Ohio.

Did you know?

- The FHSU Shotgun Team won the ACUI Lower East Coast Conference Championship in Savannah, Ga. Individual honors included two firsts, Jerrod Lies, Minneola senior, with a perfect score in Men's Trap, and Jenny Schoenecker, Akron, Colo., senior, in Ladies Trap.
- Kansas Academy of Mathematics and Science senior Charlotte Straley, Hoyt, was named a National Merit Finalist by the National Merit Scholarship Corporation. Only about 1 percent of all PSAT test takers in the United States achieve this honor.
- Fort Hays State's Hispanic College Institute, established in 2016, is a free, four-day residential program on the FHSU campus that prepares high school sophomore and junior Hispanic and Latino students for college. This year's event will be from June 19-22.
- After winning both the regular and postseason MIAA championships, the third-ranked FHSU women's basketball team was selected as the No. 1 seed in the Central Region of the 2019 NCAA Division II Women's Basketball Championship, hosted by Fort Hays State.



**FORT HAYS STATE
UNIVERSITY**

Forward thinking. World ready.

Office of the President

785-628-4231
Sheridan Hall 312
600 Park Street
Hays, KS 67601-4099

www.fhsu.edu

785-628-FHSU