



# FORT HAYS STATE UNIVERSITY



## FHSU energy independence on display

Bitter cold temperatures and dangerous winter storms swept across the nation over Valentine's Day weekend and lingered through much of the next week. On Saturday, Feb. 13, critical shortages of natural gas in the region forced Continental Gas, the university's natural gas supplier, to ask FHSU to switch to alternative energy production. Midwest Energy, the local electrical power provider, also asked the university to cut back on electrical power use once they began to struggle to keep up with demand.

The university's diesel generators were brought online, but the extreme low temperatures soon caused the diesel fuel in the generators to turn to gel. The timely application of a fuel additive enabled the diesel generators to continue functioning over the weekend and into Monday.

On Tuesday, Feb. 16, help arrived in the form of a strong Kansas wind. The university's two large wind generators immediately began producing the electricity that kept the campus open and in operation for the remainder of the week.

## OER Initiative at FHSU lowering the cost of college

According to U.S. News and World Report, the average cost to attend a public university in America is more than \$9,600 per year. While the annual cost to attend FHSU is at least \$4,000 less than this national average, the continually rising costs of college textbooks, now estimated at more than \$100 per book, remain a concern for value-conscious college students. A Spring 2019 survey by the KBOR Student Advisory Committee found that 40 percent of FHSU respondents did not purchase or rent at least one required textbook that semester.

FHSU's Learning Initiatives and Open Educational Resources Librarian Claire Nickerson is working to address this element in the rising cost of a college education. Nickerson chairs the university's Open Educational Resources (OER) Committee. Thanks to this group's efforts, the university will offer 94 courses next fall that were specifically designed to use zero-cost OER resource course materials, saving students thousands of dollars. Examples of OER resources include open textbooks offered under an open license, free but traditionally copyrighted resources, such as websites and library-licensed materials.

Labeled as Z-courses, these are the initial offerings in a program that uses a minimal cost-sharing model to incentivize faculty to design courses that will continue this cycle of textbook savings.



### Did you know?

In a typical year, FHSU's two wind turbines produce more than 56 percent of the electricity used by the university.

## Fort Hays State one of only 6 USDLA-certified institutions worldwide

FHSU Online – the distance education arm of Fort Hays State University – has earned re-certification by the United States Distance Learning Association (USDLA) through 2021. The USDLA is a nonprofit distance learning association whose work directly supports distance learning research, development and best practices.

The USDLA certification is an indicator of an online program's excellence in more than 120 areas, including:

- Administration
- Leadership and management
- Student affairs
- Teaching and learning

FHSU met the exhaustive, 120-standard assessment process for membership in USDLA in the fall of 2019 and became one of only six USDLA-certified institutions in the world during 2020. Qualities that make USDLA membership so exclusive are a thorough annual review that requires extensive reporting on all areas of the online education experience at the university.

Membership in the USDLA demonstrates the university's commitment to offering high-quality and affordable online programs that have earned FHSU Online a reputation as the best value in online education – anywhere.



## FHSU reviewing general education requirements

The new Fort Hays State University CORE General Education program adopts a learning outcomes-based approach that reduces the number of general education hours required outside students' major programs, while at the same time broadening the scope of general education. The program incorporates courses from the Kansas Board of Regents SystemWide Transfer Matrix so that students may transfer smoothly both to and from other Kansas universities and colleges.

New features include student learning outcomes in Critical Thinking, Information Literacy and Intercultural Competence. General education outcomes can be met by courses within students' major programs, reducing the number of courses that students must take outside their major while still ensuring that the university delivers vital skills.

Key areas of general education, such as Information Literacy and Senior-Level Writing and Critical Thinking, are designed to be disciplinary-specific, ensuring that students meet the outcomes in those areas directly within their major discipline. The learning outcomes are common to all students, but the instruction is focused through the disciplinary lens of the major program so that it is always relevant to student needs.

FHSU faculty are currently reviewing and approving courses to fulfill the learning outcomes-based requirements of the new FSHU CORE. The program will be implemented in the Fall 2022 term.



### Taylor McPherson

*Current FHSU Online Student*

Former Lawrence resident and FHSU Online student Taylor McPherson chose online learning for the flexibility to address personal health challenges that made on-campus learning difficult. She is on track to realize her dream of becoming a child psychologist and serving as a childcare director.



**FORT HAYS STATE  
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