

Strategic Affiliation Monthly Newsletter

November 2024

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC AFFILIATION - Peter Laipson, Ph.D.

In previous columns, I've described the goals of the Affiliation Implementation Teams (AITs), the groups responsible for "making the big ideas real" when it comes to the new relationship among FHSU, Fort Hays Tech | North Central, and Fort Hays Tech | Northwest. Most prominently, their work has included:

- Increasing academic pathways and opportunities for students to complete courses and degrees at multiple affiliate institutions.
- Identifying new programs that serve both student demand and regional workforce needs.
- Coordinating the rebranding of the technical colleges and overseeing shared recruitment practices.
- Identifying shared student services and activities across the affiliates.
- Providing guidance and courses for secondary students looking to save time and money through concurrent enrollment.

Starting in August, several additional implementation teams and task forces have been assembled and have started to meet. While some, such as the Business AIT (AIT 4), are concentrating primarily on the coordination of academic programs, others are focusing on the alignment of institutional processes. For instance, the Registrars (AIT 10) are making sure that the affiliates can identify and award appropriate credit to each student as they move among the three partners. The Institutional Research team (AIT 17) is charged with tracking students and graduates in the aggregate and establishing metrics to evaluate the affiliation's success.

Along similar lines, two other groups are working to align important aspects of the student academic experience. Thanks to the work of a task force assigned to oversee the provision of the Blackboard Learning

Management System for the technical colleges, all three affiliate partners will shortly share a common LMS. Another task force is exploring whether the three affiliates can combine common course elements of the seminar each offers for new students.

In the coming months, additional AITs will be convened to coordinate even more institutional functions, from procurement to human resources. Although these teams likely will be less in the public eye than AITs working on student pathways, they are equally important to the success of the affiliation. One of the primary goals of this venture is to ensure that the experience of every student is as frictionless as possible, and the three partners will achieve that only by collaborating across all of their operations.

President Mason's 2024 Media Tour of Kansas



President Mason's 2024 Media Tour at a glance:

- Four days and more than 1,000 total miles traveled across Kansas
- 20 stops in four days, including Dodge City, Garden City, Goodland, Russell, Beloit, Salina, Topeka, Wichita, and Great Bend
- Alumni gatherings in Garden City, Salina, and Wichita



This year's tour focused on the amazing work of our faculty, staff, students, and community partners in the communities we serve. Several tour stops focused on key aspects of the Strategic Affiliation Initiative. On day one in Goodland, President Mason; Fort Hays Tech | Northwest President Ben Schears; Kim Stewart, the chair of the FHSU Department of Applied Technology; Jonathan McClung, a drafting and civil engineering instructor at Northwest; and several Northwest students participated in a video discussion about the work of our Construction and Engineering Strategic Affiliation Implementation Team in building new academic pathways between FHSU and our two Fort Hays Tech affiliation partners.



On day three of the tour, Director of Strategic Affiliation Peter Laipson and Jennifer Brown, the dean of instruction at Fort Hays Tech | North Central, joined President Mason in Topeka for a podcast interview with the Kansas Reflector, a digital news service that covers Kansas political news. The nearly hour-long interview focused on the progress of the 14 Strategic Affiliation Teams and three Affiliation Task Forces. The three then sat down for a live interview on WIBW TV later that afternoon.



Day two of the tour featured a panel discussion on growing the number and quality of nursing and healthcare professionals in rural Kansas. President Mason was joined by Fort Hays Tech | North Central President Eric Burks; Dr. Jeff Briggs, dean of the FHSU College of Health and Behavioral Sciences; Dr. Jenny Manry, chair of the FHSU Department of Nursing; Angela Moore, chair of the Fort Hays Tech | North Central Department of Nursing; and Dr. Tanya Smith and Dr. Michelle Van Der Wege from the FHSU Department of Nursing. The panelists provided an overview of their respective programs and then fielded questions from the media and event participants.



The last day of the tour began in Wichita with another live interview. This time, President Schears and President Burks joined President Mason for a recorded radio interview with the News Director and Education Reporter for KMJW Radio, the National Public Radio station in Wichita. The three then rushed across town to participate in a live interview on KAKE TV. During these interviews, the three presidents provided an overview and a progress update on the Affiliation Initiative.