

## **Leadership at FHSU: Organized for success through inclusiveness and collaboration**

I find myself thinking a lot about leadership these days. I really like the perspective of Simon Sinek, the famous and highly popular motivational speaker, who once tweeted, “Leadership is not about being in charge. Leadership is about taking care of those in your charge.” Taking care of the people, and nurturing the university to fulfill its potential, is indeed a heavy responsibility.

I also know how blessed I am to be surrounded by so many talented colleagues. Indeed, nowhere else will you find a faculty and staff as dedicated and willing to give 150-percent effort to the FHSU mission. I rely on those talented colleagues to help shape university decisions both through formal and informal processes.

Essential to this work is a commitment to building a culture of trust, establishing clarity on how we define success, doing our best to make decisions based on knowledge rather than opinion, and creating nimble and well-defined processes (many voices with clarity regarding who is accountable for specific areas of decision making). These commitments help our university think and act strategically as we provide accessible, quality education to Kansas, the nation and the world.

As simple as those commitments may appear, to be successful, they require intentionality, focus, and practice. At Fort Hays State University, I work on a daily basis through four key groups to practice those commitments: President’s Roundtable, Executive Leadership Team, Senior Leadership Team, and Cabinet. Briefly, the purpose of each of these structures are as follows.

The President’s Roundtable consists of the presidents of the Faculty Senate, the University Support Staff Senate, and the Student Government Association. Besides me, these are the elected leaders of three primary elements of the university’s universe. Fort Hays State is so successful because we support each other and work together. In this group, we talk about our work, explain our priorities and share our perspectives. In this way, we create opportunities for collaboration and enhance our communication.

The Executive Leadership Team (the ELT) is the vice president for academic affairs, the vice president for administration and finance, the vice president for student affairs, and the president of the FHSU Foundation. This group brings together the executives responsible for leading the primary operational and financial divisions of the university. They serve in an advisory role to the president to help guide and shape the vision and strategy within which the larger university community can practice the innovation and creativity that makes the university great.

The Senior Leadership Team comprises the ELT plus the associate provost and the deans; the directors of university relations, athletics, alumni and governmental relations, and facilities planning; the chief information officer for technology; the general counsel; and the assistant vice president for student affairs and enrollment management.

The members of this group serve as consultants and coordinators for the executive team, widening the perspective of campus so that it includes both the trees and the forest. The experience ranges from academics and alumni to facilities and technology, giving leadership a view of how policy and strategy affects people throughout the university.

The Cabinet is the largest group with whom I meet regularly, and it has representatives from the broadest cross-section of the university population. Its membership includes the Roundtable, the ELT and the senior leadership as well as people who report to the vice presidents and the president of the faculty bargaining unit, the American Association of University Professors.

In this body we evaluate, discuss, create and shape the policies that guide work and life at Fort Hays State. We share information across campus and identify – and work to fill – gaps in our information and communication.

These four organizational structures are supplemented by a variety of other teams, committees and task forces that work across the university for the collective wellbeing of Fort Hays State. The people on these teams work tirelessly and deliberately to fulfill our mission by focusing on the core commitments of leadership – trust, clarity, knowledge-based decision making, and clearly-defined processes for making those decisions. Inevitably we face challenges, but we do so together, and we continue to press on and grow together.

The strength of mind and spirit, the innovation and the experimentation that are hallmarks of education at Fort Hays State are not accidents. They are the fruits of hard work in every area of the university.

I am truly fortunate to be surrounded by strong leaders who care deeply about one another and about our close-knit community; whose resolve is as firm and steady as our century-old limestone buildings; whose drive to achieve pushes students to be their best; and who understand that our students' success is the community's success, the region's, the nation's, the world's, and ours.