

A year worth celebrating

The holidays and the New Year give us both pause and impetus to reflect back on the year past. For Fort Hays State University, it has been quite a year, and I thought I would list some of the highlights in a Top 10 list – well actually my top 11 (I snuck an extra point in – similar to the extra cookie I treated myself to at the holiday party!)

The list isn't ordered, nor is it all-inclusive – so many good things happen every day at FHSU – but it gets at some of the more important happenings in 2018. So here we go:

- Kansas legislators restored \$15 million in higher education base funding – which was more than an additional \$635,000 for Fort Hays State. We are very grateful for their support.
- In May we graduated 4,533 students – an increase of 11.2 percent. This commencement ceremony also included our first six graduates from the Doctor of Nursing Practice program.
- Following a record spring enrollment last January, this fall we celebrated 18 consecutive years of record growth with 15,523 students – an increase of 423 students. Most importantly, Fort Hays State University is currently providing educational opportunities to over 7,800 Kansans, an increase of more than 30 percent over the past 10 years. Key to our growth is our increasing retention rate – now at 74 percent. FHSU has improved student retention by an average of nearly 8 percent over the past five years.
- People place their faith in FHSU in so many ways – including providing grant funding and donations. In June, we wrapped up the fiscal year with a noteworthy \$5,264,707 in grants. The FHSU Foundation Journey campaign ended the calendar year at more than \$68 million dollars in the \$100 million campaign scheduled to conclude during Homecoming 2021. In all, nearly 7,000 donors have chosen to invest in the education of current and future Tigers – remarkable!
- Men's soccer made the Final Four in the national championship competition. Football won the MIAA conference for the second year in a row in addition to making it to first round of the playoffs. By the way, 2019 shows much promise with our women's basketball team currently 10-0, ranked sixth in the WBCA Division II Coaches Poll and fourth in the Division II SIDA Media Poll. We are so proud of our student athletes and coaches.
- Safety for its students and the campus community is a top priority for Fort Hays State, and students and staff alike help keep it that way. Those measures drew the attention of others as FHSU was ranked as one of the safest colleges in America by the National Council for Home Safety and Security.
- Forsyth Library sponsored open education textbook initiatives that helped keep the cost of an FHSU degree extra affordable. Over 40 FHSU faculty attended a workshop last fall to learn how to adopt high quality textbooks that are available at no cost through the Open Textbook Network, and most took the next step to review an open textbook in their area of teaching. Grants to faculty encourage open textbook adoption and currently save students \$60,000 annually. Four new faculty grants will increase student savings even more in 2019.
- Dr. Laura Wilson (associate professor of geosciences) and Kris Super (B.S. 2017) coauthored a paper in the preeminent journal Nature. This was the first Nature publication by FHSU faculty in 17 years, the first time ever that an FHSU student coauthor was involved, and it was the first by a woman from FHSU.
- The College of Education continues to be leader in meeting the needs of PK-12 education in Kansas. We have over 1,600 students intending to become an elementary or secondary teacher, more than 300 students working towards school leadership as a principal or superintendent, and 480-plus students being prepared as specialists in counseling and special education.

- Dr. Keith Campbell, a professor of sociology, teaches grant writing and non-profit development. He invited three of his best students to work with small non-profit organizations in Holmes County, Mississippi, one of the poorest counties in the country. Each of the students is consulting with a representative of the non-profit and writing a free grant proposal on the organization's behalf. I love how our faculty provide opportunities for students to bring value to local communities and at the same time hone professional skills.
- The College of Health and Behavioral Sciences saw a lot of equipment upgrades in 2018 to further enhance real world learning experiences for our students: Nursing, in partnership with Hays Medical Center, constructed an advanced educational training center in Stroup Hall to simulate life-like medical scenarios; Psychology expanded its screening clinic; Allied Health developed state-of-the-art imaging laboratory facilities with up-to-date equipment and SonoSim ultrasound training kits; Communication Sciences and Disorders installed an innovative video/audio system in the Herndon Speech Language Clinic, providing immediate instructional feedback to students; and Health and Human Performance enhanced equipment in the areas of exercise physiology, kinesiology, and neuromuscular rehabilitation.

And of course, I cannot conclude without thanking the community for the wonderful welcome back and a memorable inauguration. As I said then, the ceremony was a formality, but it was not a celebration of me, it was a celebration for us. It was an inauguration not of a person, but of an institution, and it was our opportunity to pause and reflect on the things that make FHSU so special: Our spirit of hard work, our remarkable community, and our enduring legacy of innovation.

WOW! It has been quite a year for FHSU, and these are just a very few of our highlights. Thank you for helping me celebrate Tiger Nation 2018 as we continue to write our transformative story together. Happy New Year to you and yours, and to FHSU!