



FHSU's telehealth initiative poised to lead the way in advancing rural mental health

Fort Hays State University has significantly impacted Western Kansas by emphasizing affordability, accessibility, and adaptability. One prime example of this adaptability is introducing a telehealth certification program for mental health providers.

Telehealth facilitates the delivery of healthcare services remotely, overcoming geographical barriers. FHSU's initiative, led by Jessica Albin, interim director of counseling services, has positively impacted mental health support, especially in rural areas where traditional access to care is limited. Telehealth counseling has proven as effective as in-person sessions, offering timely support to students across Kansas, including those studying online or on campus.

This innovation addresses critical healthcare challenges by remotely monitoring patients and reducing the need for frequent in-person visits. It also yields cost savings by optimizing resources and enhancing provider efficiency.

Telehealth offers patients improved access to care, cost, and timely intervention, which is crucial for managing chronic conditions. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated telehealth adoption, with health insurers expected to continue covering telehealth visits.

FHSU's telehealth certification program addresses the evolving landscape, emphasizing technical knowledge, privacy, and ethical considerations for practitioners.

As telehealth becomes integral to mental health services, FHSU's initiative ensures that practitioners are equipped to navigate its complexities responsibly. This forward-thinking approach underscores FHSU's commitment to

innovation and its role as a leader in mental health education. Through telehealth, FHSU aims to bridge healthcare gaps and improve overall patient experiences, regardless of location or circumstances.



New Gross Memorial Coliseum HVAC system designed to reduce energy costs

FHSU's 320,000-square-foot Gross-Cunningham Complex, including the Gross Memorial Coliseum, opened in 1973. Like many of the public buildings constructed at that time, the facility was not air-conditioned. Nearly five decades later, in 2022, FHSU was awarded a \$5 million American Rescue Plan Grant by the Kansas Legislature towards the cost of installing a new HVAC system in the facility. The final cost of this project is expected to be around \$11.4 million. FHSU is covering the difference by assigning funds from the university's operating budget, the Educational Building Fund, and State General Fund Deferred Maintenance dollars. Installation of this new HVAC system began this spring and is scheduled to be completed in August of this year.

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As an additional cost-saving element in this project, FHSU decided to invest in a novel energy-saving technology that will be driven by wind power. Wind power is rarely in short supply on the High Plains of Western Kansas, and thanks to two wind turbines that began operating just west of campus in 2014, FHSU is ideally positioned to take advantage of our prevailing winds. The brainchild of former FHSU President Edward Hammond, these two turbines are in operation 24/7 and provide 56% of the campus's energy supply.

This summer, the university is installing 12 thermal storage units that will significantly enhance the efficiency of the new HVAC system. The units store ice created during the overnight hours. During the day, the melting ice will help deliver cooled air to the building. This means the new HVAC system chiller will only be needed on the hottest days of the year. The system will also draw on excess power generated by the university's twin wind turbines, delivering "free" electricity to the new system.

Integrating the thermal storage components with the new HVAC system allowed FHSU to purchase only one large commercial chilling unit instead of the two that were originally identified as necessary for this project.



FHSU's twin wind turbines at work

Since these two wind generators went live in 2014, they have produced 157,384 megawatt hours of electricity for the university and the regional electrical grid. Every two days, they produce enough electricity to power a night game at Arrowhead Stadium.



FHSU expanding community college partnerships in nursing

On January 18, Fort Hays State University President Tisa Mason and 15 Kansas community college presidents signed a significant agreement that will impact the nursing profession in Kansas. This memorandum of understanding established a cooperative relationship to facilitate guaranteed admission for community college registered nurse program graduates when they transition to FHSU to complete their Bachelor of Science in Nursing (RN-BSN).

With guaranteed admission to the RN to BSN program, students are assured that a place in FHSU's high-quality nursing education program will be waiting for them when they graduate from the RN program at their community college. Students will also be able to begin working on their BSN degree while they are still completing their RN program. FHSU offers a variety of lucrative transfer scholarships that make the pathway to this essential professional credential affordable.

Over the past two months, Dr. Jenny Manry, chair of the FHSU Department of Nursing, and Dr. Tanya Smith, the assistant department chair, have been very busy laying the groundwork to ensure students transition smoothly to the FHSU program. The pair have met in person and online with their community college counterparts from Kansas City Kansas, Barton, Cloud County, Colby, Dodge City, Garden City, Butler, Hutchinson, Johnson County, Coffeyville, Fort Scott, Labette, Neosho County, Pratt, and Seward County, as well as with nursing directors at both North Central Kansas Technical College campuses.