

To my FHSU colleagues

During the 25-26 academic year, academic affairs will focus our collective energy on four essential priorities that will strengthen our institution and amplify our impact. The four academic affairs priorities represent more than a one-year focus—they establish a multi-year direction for academic affairs. I ask for your sustained partnership as we advance this important work together in the coming academic year and beyond.

Priority One - Embody our regional purpose through engagement and dialogue

As a regional public university, our academic identity is inseparable from our service to the communities around us – and those communities are far beyond Hays. This means aligning offerings with workforce needs, strengthening community-engaged learning, and developing partnerships that extend our impact locally, across the state, nationally and internationally. Our distinction comes from how we fulfill this mission in ways others cannot.

Primary focus: Defining and advancing our distinct role as a regional public university

- Recognize the interconnected nature of our local, state, and international regions
- Align academic offerings with regional workforce needs
- Strengthen community-engaged learning initiatives
- Focus resources on signature academic programs connected to our mission
- Develop clear academic value propositions and communicate those to external and internal stakeholders
- Enhance regional (local, state, national and international) academic partnerships that extend our impact
- Cultivate a "leadership is for all" culture that empowers every member of our institutional community

Priority Two - Student Success as a shared responsibility

The new university student success plan gives us a roadmap, but its effectiveness depends on our collective implementation. This means embracing the new definition, implementing early alerts, developing proactive advising protocols, and embracing our individual roles in student success. Every academic decision we make should be evaluated through the lens of student success. Student success requires coordinated effort across our entire institution.

Primary focus: Implementing targeted interventions from new university plan for improved outcomes

- Implement proactive academic advising protocols
- Utilize data and collaboration to drive decisions and interventions
- Transform our culture to prioritize student success for all students
- Deploy early academic alert systems effectively
- Establish and monitor measurable retention targets by program

Priority Three - Academic Program Innovation & Digital Transformation

This isn't about chasing trends—it's about thoughtfully modernizing our portfolio while staying true to our mission. We'll need to develop programs in high-demand fields, implement digital-first learning environments, expand continuing education, and emphasize interdisciplinary approaches. The question isn't whether we should change, but how we can change in ways that honor our strengths while meeting emerging needs. We

must reimagine our academic portfolio to anticipate market shifts while preserving our core educational values.

Primary focus: Modernizing academic affairs portfolio through strategic program development

- Develop and emphasize market-responsive academic programs in high-demand fields
- Implement digital-first learning environments in alignment with the Digital Master Plan
- Expand professional and continuing education to serve learners
- Leverage Carnegie Classification for meaningful regional impact
- Integrate emerging technologies thoughtfully across our instructional approaches
- Foster cross-disciplinary collaboration that breaks down traditional silos
- Utilize program review as a catalyst for continuous improvement

Priority Four - Leverage existing data resources to drive academic affairs strategic decisions

We have rich data resources at our fingertips, but we're not consistently using them to drive strategic choices. I'm asking each of you to commit to evidence-informed decision making—whether that's using program analytics for curriculum decisions, enrollment trends for planning, and/or student success indicators for interventions. This isn't about replacing academic judgment with algorithms—it's about enhancing our expertise with relevant information. Our institution possesses data resources that remain underutilized.

Primary focus: Converting institutional data into actionable academic strategies

- Harness program-level analytics to guide curriculum decisions
- Use enrollment trends and employer data to inform planning
- Track student success indicators to inform interventions
- Make faculty resource allocations based on evidence rather than tradition
- Monitor market demand signals when considering program development

The work ahead is not just about institutional survival—it's about our institution thriving. It's about creating an academic environment where students discover their potential, where faculty and staff find fulfillment in meaningful work, and where our communities recognize us as an indispensable partner in their future. I ask each of you to connect these priorities to your unit-level planning. Our institution's future will be determined not by external forces, but by the choices we make together. Let us choose courage over comfort, innovation over inertia, and collaboration over isolation and fear. Let us choose to lead. Thank you for your partnership in this essential work. I look forward to our journey ahead – together.



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