



**FORT HAYS STATE  
UNIVERSITY**

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

# FALL 2025 NEWSLETTER

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# COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

## FHSU Homecoming Parade 2025



## Frank Murray Leadership Award

Dr. Paul Adams and Mrs. Judy Brummer accepted the Frank Murray Leadership Award at the CAEP Conference in September. This recognition for continuous improvement is awarded to providers that demonstrate evidence and data trends leading to CAEP accreditation with no stipulations or areas for improvement. Recipients are selected from providers granted accreditation by CAEP at the initial level in the previous year. These providers advance equity and excellence in educator preparation through the purposeful use of self-study procedures and evidence-based reporting that assure quality and support continuous improvement to strengthen P-12 learning. Our entire department had a part in this through their excellence in teaching, collecting data and analyzing it to improve. Great work across the college and the wider EPP community that has been recognized at a national level! A special thank you to Kenny Rigler and Judy Brummer for their work in leading the process!

## Welcome New Staff

Welcome new Academic Advisor, Mrs. Tara Bautista, who has a B.S. in Elementary Ed and an M.S. in Ed. Administration. Welcome to the team, Tara!

## Advising Adventures

Mrs. Megan Maskala and Mrs. Peony Weber presented their research, *Referral to Relationship: A Structured Referral Process for Faculty Mentorship in Teacher Education*, at the National Academic Advising Association conference in Las Vegas, NV late October.

Mrs. Amanda Frank also presented her research, *Castaway on Advising Island: Survival Guide*, at the annual Kansas Academic Advising Network Conference here at FHSU.





# TEACHER EDUCATION

## 6th Annual Future Educators Day

On September 29th, Teacher Education hosted the largest Future Educators Day to date. Over 200 prospective Tiger Teachers from surrounding high schools attended the day hearing from guest speakers and faculty members about the profession. Scholarships were also awarded!



The Opportunities Through Education Living Learning Community, along with Scott Gregory, had the privilege of hearing a guest presentation from former faculty member and 2025 Nita Landrum Alumni Award recipient Dr. Mike Slattery. Mike shared his story with our students and answered questions about the profession that they had.

## World Education Conference on Education

Dr. Janet Stramel was invited to present at the World Education Conference on Education (WERA) Focal Meeting in Joao Pessoa, Brazil at the end of October. Over 3,500 researchers from all over the world attended and her presentation is "Grading Outside the Box: Alternative Assessment and Student Agency." She presented this research which was done with Dr. Linda Feldstein and Ms. Robyn Hartman on alternative grading.



Dr. Matthew Clay, associate professor, won the 2025 OL Davis Jr Outstanding Book Award from the American Association for Teaching and Curriculum earlier this month for his book *The World's Educators Create: The Role of Education in the Creation of Place*.

## McMindes Hall Trick-or-Treat

Our STEM-Ed group participated in the FHSU McMindes Hall Trick-or-Treat festivities this fall. The group helped the children make Ghost Rockets and also shared exploding pumpkins with them!



# ADVANCED EDUCATION PROGRAMS

## Digital Marketing

We are on the World Wide Web! AEP has revamped and expanded our digital marketing strategies to include Facebook, Instagram, X, LinkedIn, and YouTube. We have seen a steady increase of traffic on our pages, and have been able to spotlight staff/faculty achievements, important events, program information, and much more!

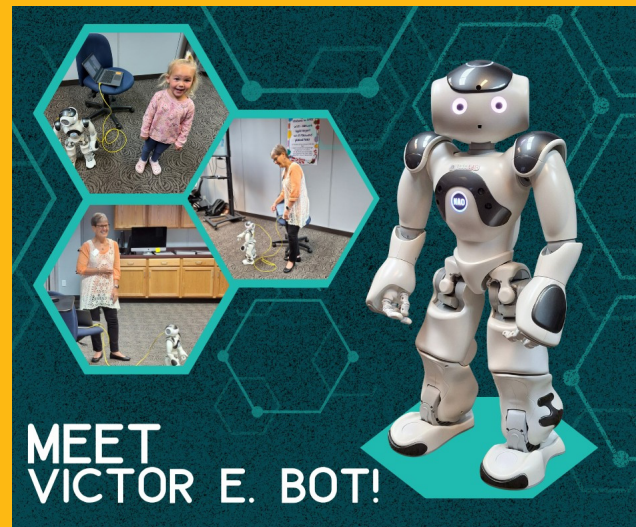


## Open Educational Resource (OER)

Drs. Phillip Olt, Yaprak Dalat Ward, Reade Dowda, Kevin Splichal, and Elliot Isom completed the OER for the AEP research courses in May 2025. It has been adopted at other institutions, including the South Dakota Board of Regents institutions, Wichita State, and the University of Wisconsin-Platteville for their similar courses.

## Victor E. Bot

Meet Victor E. Bot! Victor E. Bot is a NAO (pronounced now) robot made by Aldebaran United Robotics Group. Dr. Jerrie Brooks and TILT programmed Victor E. Bot to help people learn how to read, and he has been very popular with both children and adults alike.



## Arkansas Counseling Association 80th Annual Conference

### Keynote Speaker: Melissa J. Franzen, Ph.D., LCPC

Dr. Franzen's topic was "Perfection is Failing Us: How Self-Care Ripples into Our Care for Others", highlighting mental health counselor wellness and burnout prevention. Dr. Franzen brings 20 years of clinical experience to her role as Assistant Professor of Clinical Mental Health Counseling at FHSU. As a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor in Illinois, she specializes in clinical supervision, counselor development, child development, grief counseling, and crisis and trauma work. Her research explores advancements in counselor education and training as well as the neuroscience considerations of grief work with children.

## Welcome New Full-Time Faculty & Staff!

- Will Burns, M.S., Instructor for the Counseling Programs
- Nika Davenport, Ph.D., LMHC, NCC, ACS, Assistant Professor of Clinical Mental Health Counseling
- Drew Mohr, Ed.D., Assistant Professor in Education Leadership
- Ms. Saige Newman, Senior Administrative Assistant for the Counseling Programs
- Mrs. Bonnie Werth, Academic Program Specialist



# OFFICE OF FIELD EXPERIENCE & LICENSURE

## 240 Tutoring

This Fall, the College of Education purchased 100 credits from 240 Tutoring Praxis test preparation company that we are offering for free to candidates. Each credit represents 30 days of free access. This is a great way for candidates to complete extra study time as they prepare to take their licensing exams. The initial invitations were to current student teachers and Transition to Teaching teachers entering the program in January. The next group to have the opportunity to utilize it are the spring student teachers. The invitation process and monitoring of credits is managed by FHSU Licensure Officer, Kerry Schuckman.

## TIGRIS

After 25 years of using an internally created database for tracking admissions to teacher education, student teaching, Transition to Teaching, and licensure of candidates, we have retired this system. It functioned well, but we were looking for a more secure, robust system that could be serviced by Tiger Tech while having a wider use and offering more!

It was no small task replacing the Access database (over 15,000 records included) with a new web-app database, but Mr. Travis Taggart, FHSU Tiger Tech Enterprise Systems Director, dove right in and replicated the functionality of Access, while even adding some additional new features. We christened the new database TIGRIS (Latin for Tiger)! He was able to migrate the records from the old system to TIGRIS to allow for historical records to be accessed. Mrs. Andi Beckman and Mrs. Kerry Schuckman from the Office of Field Experience and Licensure worked with him over a span of two months and are excited to announce that it is now fully operational as of December 1! Huge shout-out to Travis for his assistance and hard work on this project for the OFEL department!



**FORT HAYS STATE UNIVERSITY** *TIGRIS*



# LANGUAGE AND LITERACY INSTITUTE

The Literacy van made an appearance in the FHSU Homecoming Parade in September! Teacher Education students helped hand out more than 500 books to children who attended the parade!



Dr. Jerrie Brooks and Dr. Carrie Tholstrup also visited the High Plains Educational Cooperative in Ulysses in September for their elementary and secondary categorical meetings. They shared the resources of the Literacy Van and the talents of Victor E Bot, which was a huge hit!

In November, the Literacy Institute provided a Literacy Night for the Oakley school district where they hosted over 35 children and their families!

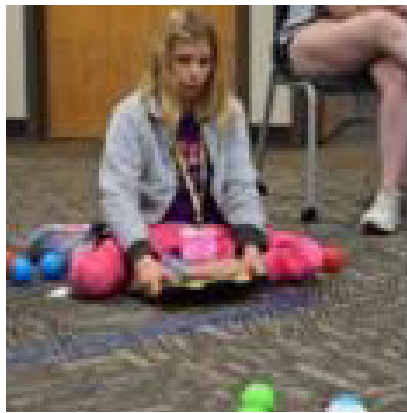
They'll also be headed to Syracuse and Copeland in the Spring 2026 semester -- stay tuned for more updates!





# SCIENCE & MATHEMATICS EDUCATION INSTITUTE

The Fort Hays State University Science and Mathematics Education Institute (SMEI) has had an impactful and inspiring year, continuing its mission to bring innovative STEM learning opportunities to students and communities across Western Kansas. Through a combination of immersive summer camps, hands-on maker programs, and vibrant community outreach events, SMEI has fostered curiosity, creativity, and career awareness in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. None of this would be possible without the continued support of our partners, educators, and community members who make it possible to provide these experiences to learners of all ages. This summer, SMEI's camps once again brought STEM



learning to life through exciting, interactive experiences in robotics, science, literacy, and weather exploration. Campers built robots, investigated renewable energy, and explored meteorology by building their own weather instruments. New additions such as the Girl's Robot O Rama Camp gave young girls a dedicated space to lead and collaborate in robotics, while returning favorites like Robo Challenge Camp and Energy Is Everywhere expanded students' understanding of coding, engineering, and energy systems. From designing Battle Bots to crafting solar ovens, each camp offered a powerful mix of learning, creativity, and fun—helping students see STEM as both approachable and exciting. Beyond campus, SMEI's outreach programs extended these opportunities to communities across Kansas. The MakerVan, a mobile STEM lab, reached more than 3,300 participants through 60 events in cities and rural towns across the state. Students and families engaged in rocket launches, high-altitude balloon experiments, and immersive astronomy experiences through the mobile planetarium.

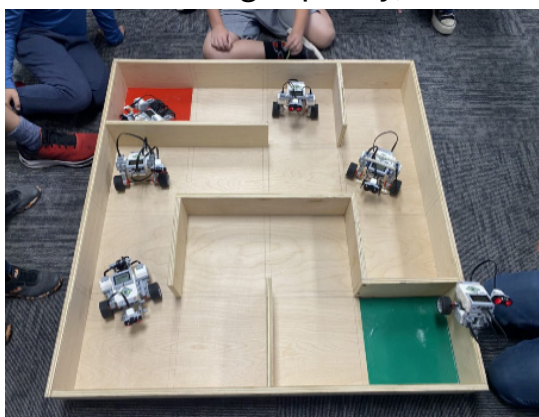
## MakerSpace

**On campus, the MakerSpace hosted more than 1,200 participants across 56 events, offering hands-on experiences in 3D printing, laser engraving, CAD design, and more! These programs, along with visits from school groups and youth organizations, continue to bridge the STEM opportunity gap in rural areas and foster innovation at every level of education!**



# SCIENCE & MATHEMATICS EDUCATION INSTITUTE

Community engagement remained a cornerstone of SMEI's work this year. The LEGO Robotics Competition celebrated its 19th year, bringing together nearly 300 students for a day of coding, collaboration, and friendly competition. The Science Café series continued to connect science and the community through engaging talks by experts on topics ranging from meteorology to artificial intelligence. SMEI also partnered with RAISE Kansas to host the first-ever Hays Science Festival, attracting more than 1,200 attendees for a day of discovery and STEMM career exploration. Meanwhile, new literacy initiatives—such as the NAO Humanoid Robot Project—combined technology and reading education to support early literacy in rural schools. Supported by numerous grants from NASA, the NSF, and other partners, SMEI continues to build the foundation for a future where every student in Kansas has access to high-quality, hands-on STEM learning. The SMEI Science Café series marked another



successful year of bringing science to life through engaging, community-centered discussions. Hosted at Thirsty's Restaurant in Hays, the Science Café invites FHSU faculty, staff, students, and community members to explore fascinating scientific topics in a relaxed, conversational setting. The 2024–2025 season featured a diverse lineup of speakers, including Ms. Holly Dickman on water conservation, Dr. Lorelei Patrick on bats and ecology, and Nathan E. Purdue on mental health and well-being. The program continued into 2025 with compelling presentations from Dr. Magdalene Moy on artificial intelligence, Mark Russell from the National Weather Service, and Dr. Rob Channell on ecological change across the Great Plains, concluding with Mr. Jeffrey G. Sekavec's talk on the role of biological agents throughout history.



As the series looks ahead, the 2025–2026 season promises another round of thought-provoking discussions. Upcoming topics include “The Biochemistry Behind Lust, Attraction, and Companionship” with Dr. James Balthazor, “Understanding Life Through Genomic Data Mining” with Dr. Michael Gruenstaedl, and “Fossils, Museums, and 66 million Years” with Dr. Amanda Peng. Additional sessions will feature Dr. Anas Hourani on computer science, Dr. Luke Helker on eco-acoustics, and a special presentation by Dr. Paul Adams in April 2026.

The SMEI Science Café is a space where science meets community—bridging disciplines, sparking curiosity, and fostering connections. The program will celebrate an exciting milestone in April 2026 with the 150th Science Café event, marking years of meaningful dialogue and shared discovery!



# EVENTS & OPPORTUNITIES



The COE hosted their first ever **Pinning Ceremony** for 67 students who were able to attend the special event, as well as their loved ones! The ceremony took place on December 11th at Beach Schmidt. It was a wonderful event for our college and great to celebrate these future teachers before commencement. We look forward to hosting our Spring Pinning Ceremony, currently slated for Friday, May 15 -- more details to come soon.

Congratulations to Dr. Chris Jochum, Teacher Education Chair, for his recently published book *You Don't Have to Leave to Lead: A Practical Guide to Teacher Leadership*. His work is based on the premise that teachers are already strong leaders; leadership isn't about a title, but about influencing others through character, courage and service. Job well done, Dr. Jochum!

Dr. Yaprak Dalat Ward started leading a faculty book study covering the book *Algospeak* by Adam Aleksik. Discussions over this book will be offered online through Zoom throughout the Spring semester. Dr. Paul Adams has been leading a book study this fall with his Dean's Council over the book, *There's Got to Be a Better Way: How to Deliver Results and Get Rid of the Stuff That Gets in the Way of Real Work* by Nelson P. Repenning. Discussions over the book will take place at Dean's Council Meetings. Both groups hope to continue gaining new knowledge and ideas for the topics they're digging into this Spring.

## Upcoming Opportunities

Teacher Exploration and Employment Fair -- Tuesday, February 10, 2026 from 10:00-12:00 in the FHSU Memorial Union. Registration is available online now!

Stay tuned for more details on an upcoming new Summer 2026 workshop opportunity at FHSU in June!

# THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

Thank you to the Credit Union of America for their support of our future teachers at our Pinning Ceremony! The pinnees who attended received a special teacher gift box from CUA filled with several items to help them outfit their new classrooms!

