

Fall Convocation August 13, 2025

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Thank you for this opportunity to introduce myself, and to serve the online student body. I was born and raised here in Hays, earned my BFA in Graphic Design in 1987, and now I am back, pursuing a degree in Health Studies. I live in Texas but spend a week each month in Hays and plan to attend as many meetings as possible in person. I look forward to working closely with President Mason, and members of the Faculty Senate, Staff Senate and on campus Student Government on behalf of all online students.

This is my third year to serve as an online senator and last year was pivotal for Online Student Government. Working closely with my predecessor, Heather Flick, we became recognized as an independent student organization, were given a seat at the table in administrative and faculty meetings, and gained traction in connecting with our constituents.

It is my hope that through our continued interaction, OSGA can create awareness about **who the online student is**, and the complexities we face in seeking a degree while working fulltime, juggling families (often both our children and elderly parents), and sometimes feeling overwhelmed, all alone and disconnected out in the ether.

To help bridge the gap between on-campus and on-line, I plan to work more closely with SGA President Jackson Sinsel, collaborating on events, and running elections concurrently to bring more attention to voting and student participation.

I hope to launch community service and virtual engagement opportunities for online students and when possible align those with on campus dates so all promotion is happening at the same time in the hopes of increased participation for both student bodies.

OSGA will continue our virtual TigerTalk series to highlight campus resources. Last year each subsequent TigerTalk yielded better participation, so I hope by continuing this series, more online students gain awareness about all that is available to support their academic journey. I want to thank Dr. Magdalene Moy for her input on hosting these events as well as her continued guidance on avenues to connect and better communicate with our online constituents.

In addition to the TigerTalks, OSGA will host one virtual TownHall each semester, connecting faculty and students for positive and productive dialogue about the challenges each party faces. Thank you to Dr. Phillip Olt, for helping make our TownHalls a reality and Dr. Shane Shartz, Dr. Anita Walters, Dr. Matthew Clay, and Dr. Ziwei Qi for giving of your time to meet face-to-face with online students. We welcome additional faculty members to participate in our town halls this coming year.

OSGA has gone international with a senator serving from Finland and another interested in joining from Senegal. Our executive committee has expanded and OSGA will now have a Vice President, Jonathan Ornales to help with executive responsibilities. Returning Senator Tavia Foley will serve as our Secretary/Treasurer. Our Public Relations Officer position is currently vacant. OSGA will fill the role through hearing nominations from the floor at our first general senate meeting of this academic year.

This year, OSGA has also gone from one to three Faculty Advisors, Dr. Joey Linn, Dr. Elodie Jones and Dr. Matthew Clay. I look forward to working under the guidance of each of you and appreciate the input I have already received from you as well as Kelsi Broadway, Director of Online Services.

I am most excited for OSGA to launch an Online Student Newsletter highlighting campus resources, faculty spotlights, news from the Fort, and most importantly features of online students. I have accumulated stories of determined students overcoming tremendous obstacles, and others working on breakthrough technologies. I look forward to us all learning more about ***who the online student is.***

In closing, I want to again thank you for this opportunity to serve online students of Fort Hays State University. I will be reaching out to many of you to see how we can work together to improve the online environment for both students and faculty.

If you have information you would like included in our newsletter, please reach out.

If you have resources the online student would benefit from, please let me know so in addition to your efforts, OSGA can share those with our community.

By working together we all can improve. And my hope is to contribute to the university and my fellow students in a way that benefits us all, both this year and beyond.