

FHSU leaders continually strive for excellence

One of our end-of-the-year rituals at Fort Hays State University is to thank the leadership of our faculty, staff, and student senates and welcome the new leaders “to the table.”

I am so grateful to my Presidents’ Roundtable colleagues (presidents of the university, faculty senate, staff senate, and student government) for their time and effort in helping me lead the university through a challenging year. Together, we discussed the work of our individual groups, expanded our perspectives as an integrated team, created opportunities for further collaboration, and enhanced campus communication.

Joining me as members of the 2020-2021 FHSU Presidents’ Roundtable were Dr. Kevin Splichal, associate professor of Advanced Education Programs, who served with excellence as the faculty senate president; Jennifer Whitmer, senior administrative assistant for the Department of Social Work, who did such a great job that she was re-elected to serve a second term; and Haley Reiter, our outstanding student body president.

Haley, by the way, is off to New Mexico for a summer internship at the Vermejo Park Ranch and will begin her senior year this fall in Belgium. A tourism and hospitality management major, Haley is taking advantage of internships, co-curricular experiences, and study abroad to build her college portfolio.

As much as I will miss Kevin and Haley, I am very excited to work with our new governance leaders. Together, we will not only lead our campus, but we will each chair the Kansas Board of Regents Councils: the Council of Presidents, the Council of Faculty Senate Presidents, the Students’ Advisory Committee, and the Staff Senate.

I want to share a bit about the members of the 2021-2022 Fort Hays State Presidents’ Roundtable:

New Student Body President Mark Faber just completed his undergraduate degree with a bachelor’s in biology (pre-med) and a double minor in chemistry and psychology. In addition to the Student Government Association, Mark has been involved with the American Healthy Heart Association and the Fort Hays State Honor Society. He is an accomplished pole vaulter for our track and field team. This next year, he will begin work on a master’s degree in biology and complete a second bachelor’s degree in psychology before heading off to medical school. Through all of these endeavors, Mark has earned many awards.

He is excited about serving as our student body president. His main focus is to increase student engagement – particularly following an academic year stifled by COVID-19 challenges. Mark’s overarching goal is for all students to experience the close-knit community at FHSU that he has.

Mark is the third youngest of four boys. Mark shared: “Living with all boys meant that everything was a competition, and we love competing in everything that we do. My family and I love to play board and card games. My friends and I recently have started playing spike ball and hackysack and absolutely love those two games. Often, my friends and I will go long boarding to relax and spend quality time with each other. I also love helping younger kids develop a

passion for school and doing well. The Fort Hays State Honor Society does a program called honor pals, where members go to a local elementary school and play or tutor kids.”

Dr. Janet Stramel, professor of Teacher Education, is the Edna Shutts Williams Endowed Chair in the College of Education. She teaches mathematics teaching methods courses for pre-service teachers. As an endowed chair, she receives funding to conduct research regarding how best to train elementary teachers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. She just finished her 12th year at FHSU. Her quality efforts have resulted in several recognitions: the University Service Award; the College of Education Teaching Award, Scholarship Award, and Service Award; and as a nominee and finalist for the Pilot Award.

Dr. Stramel has served on the faculty senate for many years. She started as a senator representing Teacher Education, then was elected secretary for three years (2011-2013 and 2014-2015). She began her service on faculty senate simply because someone asked her to consider the position. Janet shared “if we are to grow any organization or group, we must ask people to take leadership roles.” I agree wholeheartedly.

Dr. Stramel also shared with me that she loves attending meetings.

“I always learn something and feel like I can contribute to the conversation as well,” she said. “I am looking forward to meeting in person this next year, as we have lost some personal connections through Zoom meetings.”

Dr. Stramel is married to Dean Stramel, an adjunct instructor in Chemistry. They have four children and three granddaughters. She also serves as the pianist for Trinity Lutheran Church.

Jennifer Whitmer returns for a second year as our staff senate president and has worked for FHSU for 11 years. She currently serves as the administrative assistant in the Department of Social Work. She has also worked in Career Services and for Learning Technologies.

Jennifer has been a member of our staff senate for four years. The first two years we had two separate staff governance groups, and Jennifer helped merge the two groups. After the senate combined, she became vice president, and then was elected as president the following year.

Jennifer has worked hard to ensure an increase in communication and staff awareness. She was “rewarded” with a second term as president. Jennifer is a recipient of the College of Health and Behavioral Sciences Outstanding Staff Award and the My Go-To Mentoring award.

Jennifer is a Hays native, who married her high school sweetheart, John. They have four children: Jason, who is 8 years old; Jade, 6; Jacob, 4; and Jana, 2 – all sharing the initials J.W.

Other members of our excellent Fort Hays State leadership teams will also take on KBOR responsibilities. Mike Barnett, vice president for Administration and Finance, will chair the Council of Business Officers; Dr. Jill Arensdorf, provost and vice president for Academic Affairs, will lead the Council of Chief Academic Officers; Dr. Joey Linn, vice president for Student Affairs, will preside over the Council of Chief Student Affairs Officers; Jennie Rose, legislative liaison, and Joe Bain, general counsel, will co-lead the Council of Government Relations Officers; and Dr. Teresa Clouch, assistant vice president for Student Affairs and Compliance, will convene the Council of Diversity Officers.

I am confident in the progress we will make together in bringing the collective voices of our state-wide colleagues to the Kansas Board of Regents. Together, we will advance the board's strategic plan to help Kansas families, support Kansas businesses, and promote economic prosperity.

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