

2019 was another great year at Fort Hays State

The year just past was another great one for Fort Hays State University. A list of all the great things that we accomplished would stretch for pages, but it is the new year, when it is always fun to look back over the previous one and pick out some of the highlights.

This started out as my attempt at a list of the Top 10 for the year but, as with last year's list, there was just one more I couldn't leave out.

Here they are:

- The Kansas Legislature this year approved a budget that restored millions of dollars to public universities in the Kansas Board of Regents system. Fort Hays State's \$2.1 million share of the appropriation enabled us to avoid any tuition increase at all for the 2019-2020 year! I want to thank our legislators and the Kansas Board of Regents for their support of higher education in general and Fort Hays State in particular.
- Our fall enrollment count of 15,908 students marked the 19th consecutive year of enrollment growth for FHSU. Spring 2019 enrollment of 13,291 was an 18th consecutive record for that semester. The number of Kansans we serve also increased in both semesters, totaling 7,500 in the spring and 8,048 in the fall.
- With the generous support of our donors, the FHSU Foundation has made great progress fundraising for our Journey campaign. With the goal of raising \$100 million by Homecoming of 2021, we have raised \$92,750,000 thus far thanks to a total of 21,974 donors. Included in this total is an estate gift from Tiger fans Earl and Nonie Field. At the time of Earl's passing, the couples estate gift to Fort Hays State University was valued at approximately \$20 million – making it the largest single gift made to the university in FHSU history. A heartfelt thank you to those who have supported Fort Hays State University and our Journey campaign in 2019. You are changing lives!
- The Tiger women's basketball team was crowned MIAA regular-season and tournament champions and earned the right to host the NCAA Division II Central Region Championships as the No. 1 seed. The Tigers finished the season 32-2, the most wins since Fort Hays State joined the NCAA and the second most in program history.
- Last spring, FHSU senior Brett Meyer brought home a national championship for FHSU, winning the 1,500-meter run at the NCAA D-II national track and field meet in Kingsville, Texas. He is now a graduate assistant coach for the Tiger cross country and track teams and is training to qualify for the 2020 Olympic Trials.
- The Department of Nursing this year received the largest single grant in the university's history – a \$2.8 million federal grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration. The grant is for one of the many programs at Fort Hays State that aim directly at improving life in rural Kansas – the Bachelor of Science in Nursing to Doctor of Nursing Practice track of our DNP program over the next four years. The grant will not only help address administrative and equipment costs, but about half the grant will fund stipends that help students cover expenses, including travel, during the clinical portion of their training.
- Our highly successful Bachelor of Social Work cohort program expanded into Northwest Kansas thanks to a \$95,000 grant from the Dane G. Hansen Foundation, Logan. The program serves rural Kansas by creating a pathway for graduates of local community colleges to stay in their communities while earning BSW degrees. This grant enabled the university to establish new cohort groups in partnership with Colby Community College.
- Another major accomplishment in our constant efforts to make higher education accessible was a makeover of our scholarship programs, announced in October. Our four primary scholarships carry funding levels ranging from \$15,000 to \$6,000 a year. These awards are all renewable, as long as students maintain good academic standing. We also expanded

accessibility by adding the high school GPA to the award criteria rubric in addition to the ACT/College Board scores. We also increased the funding and options of our scholarships for transfer students.

- I had the privilege of conferring more than 450 degrees at our first fall commencement in December. Increasing enrollments have meant increasing numbers of graduates, and opening up a fall commencement means that graduates and their families can enjoy more fully this celebration of the great achievement of a college degree.
- Two of the four Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science teaching announced this year for Kansas went to alumni of Fort Hays State. Heidi Albin and Monica Dreiling each received a \$10,000 award from the National Science Foundation. Albin is the science teacher and character education coordinator at Complete High School in Maize, and Dreiling teaches science at Lincoln Elementary School in Hays. Both earned bachelor's and master's degrees from Fort Hays State.
- The wonderful new 43,000-square-foot, \$14.2 million art and design building opened this fall, giving the Department of Art and Design the home it has needed for so long. Designed specifically to promote learning and creative expression, the building was officially named the Schmidt Foundation Center for Art and Design in honor of the late Bob and Pat Schmidt.

As always, there is one big reason that there are always so many things to celebrate at Fort Hays State, and that reason is people – the students, faculty and staff, and the incredible support that the university enjoys from its alumni and friends, from its home community of Hays, and from the citizens of Kansas.

Thank you all for a great 2019!