



FHSU Affiliation Partners report on progress and look ahead during semiannual summit

Strategic Affiliation leaders from FHSU, Fort Hays Tech | North Central, and Fort Hays Tech | Northwest gathered in Goodland on January 8 for a semiannual summit that focused on reviewing the significant progress made in implementing an innovative higher education partnership that is already making a difference for the people, businesses, and communities of rural Kansas. Affiliation Implementation Team (AIT) leaders representing all three institutions provided updates to the assembled group. Highlights of those reports include:

- Establishing streamlined academic pathways between the three partnering institutions.
- A significant expansion in the number of on-campus career and job fairs at FHSU that provided students from all three Fort Hays schools with direct access to employers. The September applied technology career fair attracted 65 businesses and 236 students from all three Fort Hays campuses. Two other fall career fair events also proved very successful. The fall nursing career fair at FHSU drew 25 employers and more than 200 students from Fort Hays Tech | North Central, and an informatics career fair was attended by 70 students, including regional high school students.
- Expanding dual enrollment and joint enrollment opportunities for students, the implementation of a completely free transcript exchange among the three partnering institutions, and the launch of a new online tool that will allow students to explore online all the concurrent enrollment classes available to them.
- Engaging with healthcare workforce development leaders in Kansas workforce summits across the state.

Affiliation students share their transfer experiences

A highlight of the Goodland Affiliation Summit was a panel discussion featuring students who began their education at a technical college and transferred to FHSU. Recent FHSU graduate Nolan Bailey from Kansas City and current FHSU senior Creed Leeper from Coldwater both credited the close coordination between the applied technology faculty at Fort Hays Tech | North Central and FHSU with encouraging and supporting their transition from the tech college. Nolan told the assembly that he was proud to have completed his undergraduate experience free from student loan debt.

Former Fort Hays Tech | Northwest students Ella Wolfe and Sydney Schears transferred to FHSU this fall to continue their academic careers via the applied technology pathway between the two institutions. Sydney still lives in Goodland and is currently enrolled as an FHSU Online student. Ella is on campus and has just finished her first semester. Sydney noted that all of the courses she completed at Northwest transferred to FHSU, expediting her path to a degree. Ella shared that, while she initially had no intention of continuing her education beyond earning her associate's degree, a slight push from her family and several conversations with instructors at FHSU and Northwest persuaded her that continuing her education would expand her future earning potential and career options.



Larned State Hospital and FHSU: A strategic regional workforce partnership

Fort Hays State University maintains a strong and growing partnership with Larned State Hospital (LSH) to support Kansas' mental health workforce through education, clinical training, and workforce development. All students in FHSU's on-campus BSN pre-licensure program complete required clinical rotations at LSH, providing early, hands-on exposure to mental health nursing in a state hospital setting. This experience allows students to build essential skills while increasing awareness of career opportunities in behavioral health.

During the final semester of the BSN Prelicensure program, FHSU places students who select LSH in a capstone clinical experience at the hospital. This allows them to complete up to 180 hours under the guidance of on-site preceptors. Advanced practice students in the Family Nurse Practitioner program also complete clinical hours at LSH, further supporting patient care and workforce needs.

Additional partnerships include clinical rotations through Fort Hays Tech | North Central and ongoing discussions to expand collaboration through micro-credentials, internships, and educational pathways that enable LSH employees to advance their nursing education while remaining in the workforce.

LSH representatives also participate in FHSU's Employer Spotlight events, engaging with more than 200 nursing students annually.

FHSU Earns A1 Stable Credit Rating from Moody's

In December 2025, Fort Hays State University was awarded an A1 stable credit rating from Moody's. This rating reflects the University's brand and strategic positioning as an affordable provider of higher education in the State of Kansas. Specific credit strengths noted in Moody's report include:



- A favorable leverage profile with diverse sources of capital funding, minimizing the need for accruing debt
- Good tuition revenue diversification through multiple locations and delivery methods
- The important role FHSU plays as a low-cost public university with currently strong state support and oversight from a single Board of Regents for public universities in Kansas

DID YOU KNOW?

Nearly 28% of Kansas residents live in rural areas, and approximately 98% of our state's land area is classified as rural. The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) classifies 89 of the state's 105 counties as rural. FHSU's service area covers 67 (75%) those 105 rural counties.