Our Executive Team recently spent a day of learning and reflection focused on enrollment. It’s one of the most formidable issues Wichita State is facing, and our combined individual actions will do much to determine success.

All but the most elite, heavily endowed universities must grow enrollment to increase faculty positions, research funding and academic programs suited to society’s changing needs.

Increasing the number of educated citizens is crucial to the economic future and quality of life of our region and state. Growth is absolutely critical to the future of our institution. With some strategic additions to facilities and programs, we can accommodate at least 22,000 students.

Kansas, especially outside the Kansas City metro area, is a slow-growth state. To deal with that reality, we need to look beyond the state, and beyond graduating high school seniors, for most of our growth.
Having the right academic programs is the important first step. We also need to consider hybrid educational delivery models including virtual learning environments. There are many other components to evaluate, including cost, parking, safety, facilities, technology, and how easy or difficult we are to do business with, in person and online.

Every interaction with faculty, staff and policies can affect how current and potential students perceive the university. Those perceptions make a huge difference in whether students choose WSU over other institutions and if they stay once they’re here.

We think of WSU as an accessible, friendly and approachable university, but would prospective and existing students always say the same?

Some moments have really stuck with me from our Aug. 14 faculty-staff convocation. Do you remember:

- Aleks Sternfeld-Dunn demonstrating our natural inclination towards harmony?
- Tonya Witherspoon challenging us to get out from under our own umbrellas?
- Brett Morrill teaching us to make tuna marinara?

Those were all valuable lessons if we can apply them to increasing enrollment.

Here’s a framework for enrollment success we’ve been thinking about:

- Broaden the base of prospective students through initiatives such as the Oklahoma/Texas tuition reductions; the expansion of learning communities, evening course offerings, Adult Learning and Online programs; expanding our offerings of badges and certificates, sometimes in conjunction with local employers; study deepening our affiliation with Wichita Area Technical College.
- Communicate the distinct advantages of WSU – location, emphasis on applied learning opportunities, co-op and job placement opportunities; and being part of the Innovation University.
- Improve execution in all aspects of recruiting, admissions, financial aid, advising, academic experience and quality of student life. Retention is as critical as recruitment.

What would you add or change on this short list of university actions? What are the things you and your colleagues can do differently to increase enrollment in your department or college? Please send your thoughts to president@wichita.edu.
A Shocker You Should Know: Aaron Hamilton

As a child, Aaron Hamilton lived on a farm near a town with just 21 people. If you think that is poor preparation for life on a big campus – think again.

He is known and highly valued by hundreds on this campus, some of whom he helped recruit. He’s a Shocker through and through, and aside from a two-year stint away, Aaron has been at Wichita State as either a student or staff member since 1993.

In his role as associate director of admissions, Aaron oversees the operation and processing of more than a million emails and hundreds of thousands of print pieces a year.

But his favorite part of the job is when he gets to meet with prospective students and parents. He says it’s a privilege to ask questions and really learn what drives each student.

“Seeing them get excited about college and the opportunity to study what they are passionate about is exhilarating,” Aaron says. “Who could ask for more than having the opportunity to impact students’ lives every day?”

He has been married to Ronda for 16 years, and the couple have two children: Lauren, 11, and Sam, 9. Aaron and Ronda spend a lot of their free time with fellow Shocker alums and can almost always be found at Shocker basketball home games and each spring at the Missouri Valley Tournament in St. Louis.

Aaron loves working at Wichita State, but says he would like to make one improvement if given the chance.

“Chocolate chip cookie stations in every building.”

What I'm Reading: The Heart of the Matter - The Humanities and Social Sciences

The importance of the humanities and social sciences to the future of our nation

A 2013 report from the American Academy of Arts and Sciences' (AAAS) offers a comprehensive statement on the role of humanities and social sciences education in American life. It asserts that they are essential to achieving three important national goals: educating Americans in the knowledge and skills they need to thrive; fostering an innovative and competitive society; and equipping the nation for leadership in an interconnected world.
The report advances arguments for strengthening teaching and research in the humanities and social sciences. It recommends the expansion of lifelong learning programs. It recognizes the urgent need to support the next generation of humanists and social scientists. And it reaffirms the connections between the humanities and social sciences, and the physical and biological sciences.

A free copy of the report is available online at: http://bit.ly/1g75Ny2

About this Newsletter

OUR MISSION

The mission of Wichita State University is to be an essential educational, cultural and economic driver for Kansas and the greater public good. The President's Message is a monthly newsletter that highlights the university’s progress toward fulfilling that mission.

CONTACT US

We would like to hear from you. Please send your comments and suggestions for future newsletters to lou.heldman@wichita.edu

PRESIDENT’S EXECUTIVE TEAM

Anthony Vizzini, Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

Mary Herrin, Vice President for Administration and Finance

John Tomblin, Vice President for Research and Technology Transfer, Executive Director for NIAR

Lou Heldman, Vice President for Strategic Communications

Eric L. Sexton, Vice President for Student Affairs, Executive Director of Athletics

Andrew Schlapp, Executive Director for Government Relations and Board of Trustees, Innovation Alliance and Operations

David Moses, General Counsel

Elizabeth H. King, President and CEO, WSU Foundation