



## President's Message: Collaborative retention efforts

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Posted: Tuesday, April 11, 2017 Posted: 9:57:21 AM CT



As we complete the academic year, I'm encouraged and grateful for the collaborative work being done across campus to boost our retention efforts.

Retention is important for overall enrollment. It's not just about students choosing Wichita State – it's about keeping them here to complete their programs well prepared for life and work.

One of the most positive moves toward reaching our retention goals has been the reconfiguration of OneStop, led by Lisa Hansen, to include first-year freshmen advising. This new enrollment process for traditional freshmen has been led by the Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) Team chaired by Rick Muma and collaboration between OneStop, college academic advisors, the Office of Student Success (OSS), the Office of the Registrar and Information Technology Services.

Students answer an online questionnaire about class and personal preferences, and then a OneStop advisor builds a potential schedule. Students can either accept the schedule or talk with an advisor to continue the enrollment process.

We're already getting good feedback on this new system that eases the process for new freshmen and allows them to enroll earlier. So far, 700 students have completed the questionnaire. Of those students, OneStop has built almost 600 schedules, and close to 450 students have confirmed their schedule for the fall semester.

As a result of our SEM Plan, many of our retention activities are centered on goals within the OSS headed up by Kim Sandlin.

Nearly every area in OSS has seen change recently – all with an eye toward a more coordinated retention plan.

Through a SEM subcommittee, a faculty toolbox has been created. The toolbox, which you can see at [wichita.edu/facultytoolbox](http://wichita.edu/facultytoolbox), is a collection of resources, behaviors and ideas that support retention.

Tools include top 10 tips for teaching face-to-face classes and online classes, as well as weekly guides to help students with subjects from time management to preparation

Faculty are provided with these tools via messages from Tony Vizzini, WSU Today and the [WSU One blog](#). These tools equip faculty to provide students the guidance they need to succeed.

OSS has also created a new retention faculty fellows program. This group is intended to meet the objective of SEM Goal 3: Increase retention rates of degree-seeking, underserved student populations by 2.5 percent yearly through fall 2020. Their work focuses on helping retain currently enrolled undergraduate students.

The fellows will complete projects including multiple outreach campaigns to students using the Student Success Collaborative platform, hosting social opportunities for students and sharing information about retention services and resources with other faculty within their own departments and colleges.

**Retention fellows are:**

- Laura Zellers, School of Accountancy
- Shaunna Millar, School of Social Work
- Moriah Beck, Chemistry
- Abu Asaduzzaman, Electrical and Computer Science
- Danette Baker, Theater
- Cathy Durano, Curriculum and Instruction
- Lisa Belt, Dental Hygiene



Among the programs to come out of the retention fellows program so far are Pop-Up Test Prep parties and Enrollment Prep Pop-Up lunches. These meetings are planned for high-traffic areas, such as Shocker Hall and outside of specific classrooms after class. The goal is to meet students where they are.

Not only do these pop-ups help answer questions about enrollment and prepare students for tough classes, they build awareness with students that our faculty and staff care about their success.

Coming this summer will be a concentrated effort in Student Affairs, led by new VP for Student Affairs Teri Hall, in developing additional retention plans from a student affairs perspective.

These are just some of the efforts that have grown out of the SEM process, and I'm thankful to everyone who has taken part.

If you want to learn more about SEM, go to [wichita.edu/SEMplan](http://wichita.edu/SEMplan).

Our [most recent statistics](#) show that retention is slowly but surely growing, and with continued collaborative work, I believe we'll see those numbers continue to rise.

# A Shocker You Should Know: Pamela O'Neal

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When Pamela O'Neal talks with current and prospective students about what it takes to succeed as an adult learner, her advice comes with 15 years of first-hand experience.

All set to start college straight out of high school in 1989, Pamela's course quickly changed when she tore her ACL weeks before she planned to enroll in Sterling College on a volleyball and softball scholarship.

"I was to have surgery the day classes were to start and was told that I was going nowhere for a year," she says. "I was devastated. All my friends were leaving to go to college and I was going nowhere. After that year passed, I felt I just couldn't play anymore."



Pamela opted to join the workforce, getting a job at Rand Graphics. But, she says, she never forgot about college, and in 2002, mustered the courage to take her first class at WSU. English 101 led to English 202 – and she was hooked. Five years later, working the whole time at Rand, she graduated with a bachelor's in communication and English literature.

Pamela's dream was to write for a newspaper, but in 2007, nobody was hiring. A professor suggested she get her master's in communication.

"I remember thinking to myself, 'Can I honestly do that? Am I smart enough to get my master's degree?'"

Best decision ever, she says.

While in grad school, Pamela taught public speaking as a GTA, lectured after she graduated and started working for Communication Upward Bound. She earned another degree in that time – a master's in public health from the KU School of Medicine.

Through her work in health care, Pamela made connections that led her back to Wichita State as communications, public relations and recruitment specialist for WSU's School of Nursing.

She worked there for three years before making the switch to the Office of Adult Learning, where Pamela now works as the office and communications manager. After all her years engrossed in higher education as a student and working adult, this is where Pamela feels most at home.

“I do what I can to encourage and help students who want to get their degree. I know what it’s like. I’ve been there. It’s scary, it’s intimidating and as an adult, their time is limited,” she says. “They are often working full time, married and taking care of children. It’s good to be able to tell them that I can help. Often they appreciate hearing from someone who is a returning adult student.”

Not content with her three degrees, this summer Pamela will start work on her Doctor of Education Leadership degree. She’s a little scared, but says she’s seen other adult learners overcome bigger hurdles.

***“When I tell students we exist, and that they have a place where they can go to find other students like themselves, you can almost see a weight being lifted off of them.”***

***– Pamela O’Neal***

And if there’s one thing Pamela is used to, it’s hard work. Growing up on a dairy farm a few miles north of Conway Springs, the cows had to be milked every day – weekends and holidays included. It’s here, she says, where she developed such a strong foundation. A tightknit family that includes three older brothers and two younger sisters also played a vital role.

Nearly 30 years after that fateful day in high school, Pamela has a perspective that often only comes with experience.

“When I tore my ACL, I thought my life was ruined. Looking back, it may have been one of the best things that happened to me,” she says. “I came back to school at 32 years of age. I was a lot more mature and really ready to learn than I would have been at 18.

“I knew what it was like to work, and my future looked gloomy, to say the least, without a college degree. My whole outlook changed when I enrolled for classes and learned that I was smart enough and that I could indeed get a degree.”

Pamela says she would have killed to have an Office of Adult Learning when she was an undergraduate at WSU. Just knowing you have an office where there are others like you, she says, is one of the biggest advantages WSU’s adult learning services can offer.

“When I tell students we exist, and that they have a place where they can go to find other students like themselves, you can almost see a weight being lifted off of them,” she says. “WSU is a very special place to me. It’s helped me grow and become a better person.”

# Diversity Update: The advancement of diversity and inclusion

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The advancement of diversity and inclusion is an ongoing discussion that progresses through a shared understanding of challenges and commitment to growth. Last month, the university Strategic Planning Forum featured an update on the state of diversity on campus. As we make progress, we should be proud of our efforts as the forum highlighted improved coordination and the many Shockers who go above and beyond to create a culture of diversity and inclusion.

Within the WSU community, we recognize progress is made by creating opportunities for shared experiences. One recent example was the performance of *Ain't I A Woman*. In collaboration with the President's Diversity Council, English Department and USD 259, the School of Music provided a unique experience that explored African-American history through the lens of four prominent African-American women. This is one of the numerous opportunities that WSU offers, and I encourage faculty, staff and students to take advantage of these opportunities.



I would like to thank Alex Chaparro and Traniece Bruce for their service to the President's Diversity Council. Both of these outstanding colleagues have made a tremendous contribution to diversity and inclusion on campus and are pursuing new opportunities. They will be missed and we appreciate all of their efforts.

Please go to the [President Diversity Council website](#) for updates, training and programs on diversity.

*"We are all different, which is great because we are all unique. Without diversity life would be very boring." — Catherine Pulsifer*

— **Marché Fleming-Randle, Ph.D.**  
**assistant to the president for diversity**  
**Wichita State University**

# Grant of the Month: Zheng Chen's CAREER grant

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Zheng Chen, an assistant professor of electrical engineering and computer science at Wichita State's College of Engineering, has been named a National Science Foundation CAREER Grant Award winner.

Faculty Early Career Development (CAREER) Program grants are the most prestigious awards in support of junior faculty who exemplify the role of teacher-scholars through outstanding research, excellent education and the integration of education and research within the context of their organizations.

Chen received a \$500,000, five-year NSF CAREER Award for his project "Artificial Muscle Based on Dielectric Elastomers for Dexterous and Compliant Prostheses," which will begin this May. The ultimate goal of the project is to achieve dexterous, lightweight and energy-efficient prostheses using DE-based artificial muscles, in contrast to the heavy and inefficient electric motors of the current generation of robotic arms.

The project incorporates aspects of bio-inspired design, device fabrication and dynamic modeling, sensing and control. The success of this project will help provide affordable, reliable and comfortable prostheses to the estimated 2 million military veterans and civilians who have lost hands, arms or legs to accidents, natural disasters, wars, diseases or aging. This project will also train the next-generation workforce with skills in the dynamic modeling, control and fabrication of devices based on smart materials and structures.

"Dr. Chen's novel approach to artificial muscles has significant potential to help populations who have suffered the loss of a limb due to trauma, infection, diabetes or other diseases," said Jan Twomey, associate dean for graduate studies, research and faculty success in the College of Engineering.

This is the fourth CAREER Award winner in four years for the WSU College of Engineering.

# Metric of the Month: Licensing agreements

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The Strategic Planning Steering Committee, in consultation with University Academic Affairs and the college deans, has developed a [university dashboard](#) that intentionally gauges collective performance of WSU on representative meaningful metrics.

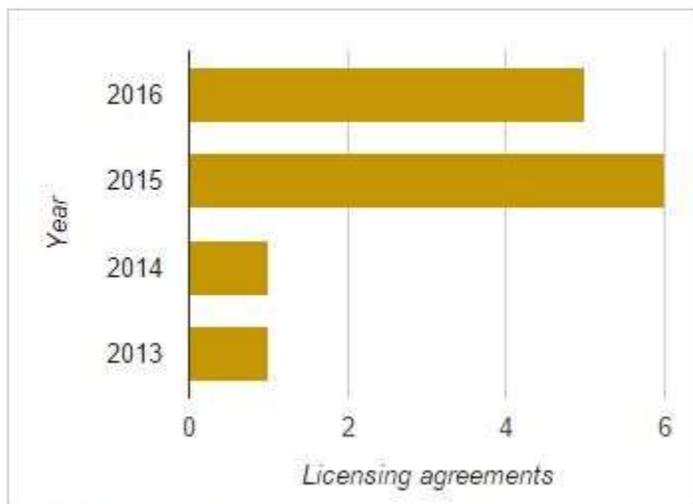
The highlighted metric for the month is licensing agreements.

The number of licensing agreements relates to numerous WSU strategic goals, including the discovery creating and transfer of new knowledge. Licensing agreements also pertain to WSU's mission of being an educational, cultural and economic driver for Kansas and the greater public good.

See the graph below for details.

## LICENSING AGREEMENTS

Number of agreements signed



SOURCE: WSU Ventures

# What I'm Reading: '6 Reasons You May Not Graduate on Time'

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Graduating from a four-year college in four years may sound like a straightforward venture, but only 41 percent of students manage to do it.

And unfortunately, the longer it takes, the less likely a student is to make it to graduation.