President’s Message: Enduring values in a time of change

I want to expand on the message I shared last week with a joint meeting of constituent senates. It is that our university’s highest purpose has remained the same since its founding 123 years ago: to lift up lower and middle-income people through education. Some of our earliest students earned the name Wheatshockers not by buying the T-shirts at the bookstore, but the old way – by working in the fields in the sun, bringing in the cash crop.

Now, as then, we need to teach the subjects that will help our students learn to love knowledge and to succeed in their lives and work. Through the many individual success stories that we nurture, our community will also prosper.

The American model of universities has its roots in England, Italy, France and Germany. Those universities began as a way to educate clergymen and then the elite. The unique American contribution is the democratization of higher education, making it available to the common people at an affordable price. That has been especially true of what began as the tiny, private Fairmount College and grew into the Wichita State University we know today.

I’m reminded of our history by two items in my office.
On my bookshelf is a painted ceramic bust of the philosopher Plato, who is credited with establishing the first known western institution of higher education. A yellowing note on the back said it was kept on the desk of Nathan Morrison, the first president of Fairmount College.

I sit at a desk I sought out when I returned to Wichita State six years ago. When I arrived here in 1973 as an assistant professor, the desk belonged to President Clark Ahlberg. The brass seal on its front shows the university’s seal and three important dates in its history: 1895, when it was founded; 1926, when it became a municipal university; and 1964, when it became a state university.

It’s important to understand that innovation isn’t a new idea at this university. It has always been part of our fabric. Throughout WSU’s history, we have invented and adapted our teaching, research and service to address the emerging needs of our society. We have developed curriculum, degree and certificate programs to reflect the needs of our students, place and times.

Today is different because accelerating technology, declining state funding and increasing competition mean that we can’t take as long to change. There will be two types of universities that continue to succeed – those historic brand names that primarily serve the financially or intellectually elite, and those, including WSU, that are agile enough to adapt to a world where success is based on creativity, diversity, globalization and new models of education.

We need to think about the 30-year-old parent of three and other working adults, who don’t fit into the traditional education model of 15-week, 3-credit lecture classes. We need to serve them, too, with higher education requiring shorter commitments that fit their busy lives and employer needs for skills certifications.

We need to think of the underprivileged children, including those right on our doorstep in 67214 who may come to class hungry and need a special hand to get into and through college.

We need to think about meeting the needs of students who want to work fast-growing industries, like videogame design, senior health services, content marketing, artificial intelligence, sustainable energy and composite-based medical devices.

Through what we do at Wichita State, through what we have always done at Wichita State, we serve the needs of our people and community and fulfill the promise of democracy. I’m glad to be on this journey with you, my fellow Wheatshockers. Please send me your thoughts, president@wichita.edu.
SEM Check-In: I-35, non-degree, online update

In conjunction with the University’s Strategic Planning process, WSU has developed a Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) plan for growth over the next three years. To stay informed on the progress toward our goals, each month we will provide the status of one of the goals and provide information for you to assist us in moving the goal forward.

This month we will provide updates on the enrollment goals tied to the SEM plan; specifically, enrollment along the I-35 corridor (Goal 4), non-degree enrollment for credit (Goal 5) and new online program majors enrollment (Goal 7).

SEM Goal 4 addresses expanded enrollment along the I-35 corridor, specifically Missouri, Oklahoma and Texas. Since 2012, we have seen an increase in fall census enrollment, with Missouri and Oklahoma nearly tied for largest and Texas quickly catching up (a Texas-based recruiter was added late last year). Latest admission data shows a continued increase among these three states with fall 2018 admitted students from Missouri, Oklahoma and Texas up 55 percent over last year at this time.

![I-35 Corridor Enrolled Fall Census](image)

SEM Goal 5 focuses on the development of credit bearing courses for non-degree seeking students who are in search of professional development and lifelong learning opportunities. While high school concurrent and lifelong learning have been part of our course options for some time, in 2015 we saw the introduction of market-based and micro-credential course work. This last fall we had 1,252 students (unique headcount) enrolled at census in these courses, an increase of 171 percent over fall 2016. We currently have 18 new badge courses slated for this coming fall.
SEM Goal 7 looks at the expansion of online programs. This goal adds to our already increasing online enrollment. We currently have 18 online degrees and six certificate programs enrolling students, and four new online programs expected in 2018. Our online programs place us at a strategic advantage in that we can offer fully online programs to meet the needs of both local and distance markets. While enrollment is largely impacted by the number of online programs we offer, we have seen a significant increase in online program majors with a 32 percent increase this fall at census over fall 2016 at census.

What can you do?

We know that the No. 1 reason a student decides to come to WSU is through personal contact with one of us at the university. You can continue to be an ambassador for WSU by:
• Staying informed of the progress and efforts of Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) and share that information with those in your area.
• Collaborating with offices and programs at their recruitment and enrollment events.
• Talking to friends and family about the great things happening in your area and at WSU.
• Supporting the efforts of enrollment offices, online and WPCE when requested.

Thank you for all that you do to support SEM. It takes all of us to make sure current and prospective students have a great experience at WSU.

Thoughts or questions? Write to Rick Muma, interim provost, richard.muma@wichita.edu.
April is Diversity Month. The WSU campus is filled with a rainbow of races and religions — all equal in every way. It doesn’t matter if you don’t understand them all or even know they exist, but it does matter that you accept them all and do not judge any of them as less than worthy. Shocker Nation – we are all in this together, and our ignorance of other’s beliefs is no excuse for intolerance in any form.

The Division of Diversity and Community Engagement launched The Tenacious Ten in collaboration with Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness Program for Undergraduate Preparation (GEAR UP). The Tenacious Ten is a youth development program designed to educate, equip and empower young men with life skills in support of educational attainment of an undergraduate degree.

Under the leadership of Kevin Harrison, community engagement coordinator, these young men will be mentored and supported from high school through college. From self-efficacy to career exploration, The Tenacious Ten program was developed to address the needs and challenges faced by males from underrepresented populations in the greater community.

We are thrilled to support youth who have historically been underserved, and we appreciate the support of community volunteers and partners who are making an investment in the future of our youth. Over the next year, The Tenacious Ten will be active on campus to learn about the undergraduate experience while also giving back to others through community service projects.

As the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement staff cultivate new relationships, there will be a variety of upcoming opportunities for WSU faculty, staff and students to collaborate, and we look forward to engaging WSU and the greater community to achieve measurable results.

According to Robert F. Kennedy: “It is not more bigness that should be our goal. We must attempt, rather, to bring people back to … the warmth of community, to the worth of individual effort and responsibility … and of individuals working together as a community, to better their lives and their children’s future.”
This sentiment underscores the interconnectivity of building community, and the Diversity and Community Engagement staff look forward to expanding dialogues and creating opportunities to bring the WSU community together.

Shocker Pride!

Dr. Marche Fleming-Randle
Vice president, Diversity and Community Engagement

“Our diversity is our strength. What a dull and pointless life it would be if everyone was the same.” Angelina Jolie
Wichita State University physics professor Nickolas Solomey has won one of NASA’s coveted Innovation and Advanced Concept Awards (NIAC) for his research to create a neutrino detector for close sun orbit.

The award includes approximately $125,000 over nine months to support initial definition and analysis of the concept.

Solomey’s research focuses on the creation of spacecraft and detector technology capable of operating close to the sun. This technology is needed, he says, to study the sun’s solar interior to better understand its future expected changes, as well as fundamental physics that involve the sun.

» Read the full story below:
Physics professor's innovative concept could revolutionize space exploration

- WSU physics professor Nickolas Solomey and graduate student Caleb Gimar are working on research to someday build a detector that could be flown near the sun.
- The detector would revolutionize the way scientists study the sun and provide wonderful new insights into particle physics.
- Solomey's research was boosted by an Innovation and Advanced Concept Award given by NASA.

Wichita State University physics professor Nickolas Solomey has won one of NASA’s coveted Innovation and Advanced Concept Awards (NIAC) for his research to create a neutrino detector for close sun orbit.

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NASA selected 25 early-stage technology proposals that have the potential to transform future human and robotic exploration missions, introduce new exploration capabilities and significantly improve current approaches to building and operating aerospace systems.

“This is certainly very ambitious. We’re trying to do something that is somewhat unprecedented.”

–Caleb Gimar

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Along with NASA’s immense capabilities, this could revolutionize the way in which scientists study the sun and provide wonderful new insights into particle physics, Solomey says.

“If we can take a very small neutrino detector, instead of these kiloton ones like we have here on Earth … that will allow us to look directly into the core of the sun,” he says.

First-year physics graduate student Caleb Gimar, who is working alongside Solomey on the project, says this is an exceptionally innovative opportunity for him to be a part of.

“This is certainly very ambitious,” Gimar says. “We’re trying to do something that is somewhat unprecedented in the sense of trying to put a detector in the near solar environment.”

» Learn more about Solomey's research.
In conjunction with the university’s strategic planning process, WSU has developed a Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) plan to grow enrollment over the next three to five years. It will take a concerted effort by all of us in the WSU community to achieve the stated increase in enrollment. We all have to positively promote WSU, serve students and one another and ensure each student has an excellent experience at WSU.

To assist in the fulfillment of our goals, the university, through a campus-wide input process, has adopted Service Standards. These standards are things we can all do to create a welcoming environment for all who serve and are served at the university.

The standards are called Shocker PROUD, which stands for professional, responsive, open, understanding and dependable.

The student experience must be positive, timely and responsive, professional, and provide easy, helpful access to information and/or assistance by those best situated to provide the needed assistance.

Keep an eye out for continuing campus-wide communication about Shocker PROUD and upcoming training sessions this summer to help us deliver on our promise to the students of Wichita State and all of us who serve in the WSU community.

Judy Espinoza, human resources executive director
The old methods of training America's workforce are no longer sufficient in the 21st-century economy. Instead, a new wave in education and training has arrived, one that is likely to be marked by continual training throughout a person’s lifetime -- to keep current in a career, to learn how to complement rising levels of automation and to gain skills for new work.

This lifelong learning model means workers will likely consume their education in short spurts when needed, rather than as they do now, taking months or years to complete certificates and degrees.

» Read the full article.