



WICHITA STATE UNIVERSITY UPDATE

Welcome Back from Provost Muma

August 17, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to the fall 2020 semester! I hope this letter finds you safe and well. Despite the unprecedented challenges our university has faced due to COVID-19, the fact that we are in a place to have a timely start of the fall semester speaks volumes to the campus resiliency and to you, specifically your efforts these past months.

Most of my communication as of late has been COVID-19 centric, and while I'll have a few items to pass on related to COVID-19, I want to first thank you so much for the work you accomplished last year. Even though last year was challenging, we were still able to continue the momentum and move forward.

We made amazing progress on the [2019-2020 priorities](#). Most of those priorities will continue, and new ones will be established on recommendations of the [various task forces](#) commissioned by President Golden this past spring. All of this work connects to our [strategic plan](#).

A few things that I'd like to point out where we have made some exceptional progress:

Organizational changes and a new dean:

- With the start of the new fiscal year, President Golden made several organizational changes. Four additional areas are now coordinated under my area of responsibility and include: Student Affairs; Military, Veterans and First Responders; New Ventures and Innovation; and Research. These first two changes are meant to better coordinate the student experience, with the latter two areas working more closely with faculty to increase funded research and innovation.
- We've hired a new dean, [Dr. Greg Hand](#), for the College of Health Professions. Dr. Hand comes from West Virginia University and is internationally recognized for his work on physical activity and health.

Enrollment and improving the student experience:

- We topped 16,000 in enrollment for the first time in more than 30 years:
 - Increased our 6-year graduation rate to 50.2%, a 10% gain from 2010.
 - Increased under-represented minority enrollment by 2.8% with 18% of all students and 20.3% among degree seeking undergraduates being under-represented minorities.
 - 13.4% of degree-seeking undergraduates are Hispanic, the highest percent in WSU history, an increase of 7.2% from 2018.
 - Started the Army ROTC program with 47 students.
- We housed more than 1,463 students, the most in university history with 51.6% of new full-time freshmen in university housing.
- We supported our large first-generation student population:
 - Becoming a NASPA First-gen Forward Designated Institution.
 - Earning a spot in the inaugural cohort of First Scholars Institutions. We are one of 35 institutions with this designation.
 - Gaining recognition from CollegeNet for a third year as a social mobility innovator.

Research

- In partnership with my office, President Golden, the deans, the AVP for research, and faculty, we continue to make investments in support of research:
 - Made available \$150,000 for summer student research support.
 - Made available \$150,000, with a goal to provide an extra \$300,000 annually, to make doctoral level research stipends competitive with our peers.
 - Launched the [President's Convergence Science](#) initiative, and will be funding four proposals totaling \$1.2 million (over three years).
- The university increased research funding to a new record, over \$160 million in fiscal year 2020.

Workforce development:

- The faculty across three colleges have developed new degree program proposals related to digital transformation.
 - Business Analytics – W. Frank Barton School of Business
 - Data Science – College of Engineering
 - Mathematical Foundations of Data Analysis – Fairmount College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
 - Applied Linguistics - Fairmount College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
- If approved by the faculty and KBOR this fall, these programs will be available for enrollment in the spring and align with the university's emerging focus on digital transformation and the creation of the National Institute for Digital Transformation.

- Academic Affairs annually supports more than 25 Faculty Fellows in a variety of areas. The commitment of these faculty to develop professional skills in recruitment, retention, new student orientation, service learning, promoting curricular diversity, honors, and applied and experiential learning helps advance our strategic plan.

Finally, as we start the semester, I am fully cognizant of the challenges we face with COVID-19. I am committed to doing whatever I can to make it as smooth as possible. While I am hopeful for a successful fall semester and academic year, we all need to put our best foot forward for the benefit of students. Many of them are returning with anxieties and uncertainties, but I know if we make meaningful connections with them, they will persist and thrive. Take time to review the detailed information communicated to [students](#) and [employees](#) a few weeks ago in regard to COVID-19. In this communication, you will find answers to the questions you might still have as you begin the semester.

As you can see, even in the face of COVID-19, we are making great strides at WSU. None of this could be possible without each and every one of you.

I wish you all of the best for a great fall semester!

— Rick

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