

## Forward Together: President's May 2021 Message



### Congratulations, Shocker graduates!

As with the close of every semester, we celebrate our Shocker graduates. But this semester, it's more than that.

Though all graduates deserve recognition for earning a degree, our 2021 grads accomplished their academic goals under the cloud and uncertainty of a global pandemic.

Your grace, flexibility, and perseverance, during what was undoubtedly a hectic year, are applauded by all of Shocker Nation. We could not be prouder nor more in awe of their success. Congratulations.

There's another reason why this particular graduating class is special to me: This is my first graduating class since being named president of Wichita State University earlier this month. Just like I've watched our grads grow from students to career-ready professionals for the past few years, I've had the opportunity to witness the innovation explosion of Wichita State over the past 25 years.



Dr. Richard Muma, president

It's my goal to keep that momentum going and work with all of Shocker Nation to help us achieve our goals of making education accessible and affordable for Kansas families; supporting businesses with a talent pipeline that meets employers' needs in our state; and increasing the economic prosperity with higher education for the benefit of the Kansas economy.

During my administration, I promise to work hard every day with all of Shocker Nation — faculty, staff, students, community leaders, alumni, and innovation partners — to advance three presidential priorities:

**Accelerate applied-learning opportunities:** This is something that goes straight to the heart of what makes Wichita State great. Giving our students the opportunity to get real-world experiences through internships, research or co-ops allows them to train side-by-side with professionals in their chosen industry, build professional networks and resumes, and earn a paycheck.

**Grow research and innovation:** Wichita State is well on its way to establishing itself as a premier, urban-serving research university. We're consistently No. 1 in the country for industry-funded aeronautical research and development. And in addition to making WSU the innovation powerhouse that it is, research brings invaluable partnerships to our community, creates jobs for Wichitans, and increases the overall economic prosperity for Kansas.

**Focus on freedom of expression:** At Wichita State, all opinions and ideas are welcome. We encourage rigorous debate and lean into difficult conversations. Free expression is what fuels the pioneering innovation that is the cornerstone of everything we do.

Sincerely,

Dr. Rick Muma

President of Wichita State University