

## Forward Together: President's November 2021 Message



### Celebrating first-generation Shockers

November is First-Gen Month, and it's an opportunity for all of Shocker Nation to celebrate the vitality that this segment of our student population brings to our campus community.

Just to paint a picture of first-generation students at Wichita State:

- A first-generation student is someone whose parents or guardians did not complete a four-year degree.
- At Wichita State, 44% of our undergraduate student body identifies as first-generation college students.
- Wichita State saw an increase of 26.9% for first-generation graduate students for fall 2021.
- Recent [enrollment data](#) shows that 34.2% of Wichita State's first-gen students are from low-income families and identify as an underrepresented minority.



Dr. Richard Muma, president

For any student who's coming to college for the first time, there can be concern about what books to buy, how to find the best route to get across campus, talk to faculty, and how to get academic help for difficult classes. But these anxieties are often heightened for students who are the first in their families to attend college — or first-generation students.

Oftentimes, these students don't have friends or family who understand the nuances of college life or someone to help them navigate processes and culture of a campus. First-gen students sometimes feel like there's no one who can support them through the rigors and demands of college life.

At Wichita State, [we have several programs and offices](#) that are dedicated solely to supporting the unique needs of first-gen students from the application process, all the way through graduation, and even as a Shocker alum. Available services include tutoring, money management, counseling, and help completing financial aid and scholarship applications.

For our efforts to improve the outcomes for first-gen students, Wichita State has been recognized as a [First-Gen Forward institution](#) and as a First Scholars institution.

We understand that it's not always an easy path for these pioneers, but we commend the bravery it takes to believe in themselves, and we are honored to be part of their journey. Our aim is to make the Wichita State experience a little smoother and reduce some of the anxiety that comes with being the first.

Beyond the uncertainty of everyday campus life, the most significant stressor for first-gen students is often finances. Because many of them are from low-income households, they may need additional scholarships, grants, and loans to help them pay for college.

Through our efforts to make a Wichita State education affordable and accessible, we have prioritized raising need-based aid for our students. Many of our local students qualify for our [Shocker Promise](#), which provides last-dollar funding to high school graduates from Sedgwick County.

Additionally, many of our applied-learning opportunities help students earn a paycheck while working real-world internships in their chosen career. That income can make a world of difference for students in paying for tuition, books, and living expenses.

Families interested in finding out what aid is available can fill out the [Free Application for Student Financial Aid](#). It only takes about 20 minutes to complete, and it will determine your eligibility for grants, scholarships, work-study, and loans. It should be noted that Dec. 1 is WSU's priority deadline for the 2022-23 academic year.

Go Shockers!

Sincerely,

Dr. Rick Muma

President of Wichita State University