



## Forward Together: President's May 2022 Message



## Wichita State celebrates Latinx community

This month's "Forward Together" podcast was a lot of fun to record. Not only did I interview two outstanding Wichita State University faculty — Dr. Enrique Navarro, associate professor of Spanish, who discussed his new book, *Mexican Americans of Wichita's North End*; and Dr. Rocío del Aguila, Wichita State's graduate coordinator and associate professor of Spanish — Dr. del Aguila prepared an array of Latin dishes from around the world, which was to do with her interest and research expertise in food and culture. I hope you'll [tune into the podcast](#) to hear both and see what Dr. del Aguila cooked up.

On a daily basis, these faculty share their expertise with a growing population of WSU students who identify as Latinx. Along the lines of the podcast topic, Wichita State had more cause to celebrate the Latinx community when our record-setting enrollment numbers came out in September 2021. As we drilled down into the statistics, it confirmed that we're reaching new generations and populations of Shockers.



**Dr. Rick Muma, president**

One statistic that was particularly encouraging was that we had a 24.9% growth in first-time-in-college Hispanic students. In total, these new students bring our total Hispanic population to just under 15% — well on our way to reaching our goal to become a [Hispanic Serving Institution](#) (HSI) by the end of this decade.

To become an HSI, an institution needs to have "an enrollment of undergraduate full-time equivalent students that is at least 25% Hispanic students."

You might ask why such a specific demographic is so important to the future of Shocker Nation and why we're aiming for an HSI designation. There are a few answers to this:

- First, the Hispanic population in Wichita and Sedgwick County is growing, and in the last U.S. Census this demographic grew 28% from 2010 to 2020.
- Our priority of making a Wichita State education accessible and affordable to Kansas families plays an important role in our recruitment and outreach to new populations of students, and many of those students identify closely with their Latinx heritage.
- Additionally, an HSI designation has the potential of bringing in additional federal funding to support Latinx students in the form of scholarships and student support services to assure they graduate.
- Recruiting students of color and from diverse backgrounds into our student body benefits everyone in Shocker Nation, including those that hire our graduates. As the most diverse university in the state, our diversity is our strength, and the Latinx community is an integral part of that strength.

For Wichita State, we see it as an imperative that we work diligently to ensure that people from diverse communities not only find a home on our campus but find the space to thrive and achieve their goals and become the leaders and professionals of tomorrow.

**So, what are we doing to attract and retain Latinx students to Wichita State?**

- We're focused on raising need-based aid to remove financial obstacles for students.
- We also know Hispanic students have a higher likelihood of be first-generation students which means they might have more need on how to apply for and receive financial aid, choosing classes, or navigating the nuances of campus life. For this reason, we have a [Constellation of Support](#) for our first-gen students.
- We match scholarships from the [Kansas Hispanic Education and Development Fund](#) (KHEDF) based here in Wichita — meaning that KHEDF provides scholarships to students, and we match for students attending Wichita State.
- Through the generosity of our Shocker community, several [multicultural scholarships](#) have been established specifically for underrepresented minorities, including the [Adelante Scholarship](#), which offers 20 renewable, high-impact scholarships to students who are of Black and/or Hispanic/Latinx heritage.
- Yolanda and Gene Camarena, who established the Adelante Scholarship mentioned above, also included additional funding in their gift to support new staff in the [Office of Admissions](#) and the [Office of Diversity and Inclusion](#). These staff members work to translate recruitment materials into Spanish, presenting information to families about WSU, and event programming geared toward bilingual families.
- For all students demonstrating need, [the Shocker Promise](#) provides last-dollar funding (which means funding after other forms of aid are first included toward a student's scholarship package) to all 2021-2022 high school graduates from Sedgwick County.

Nothing pleases me more than welcoming new Shockers into our family, and I'm excited about our journey to bring more diversity onto our campus for the benefit of all of Shocker Nation.

Go Shockers!

Sincerely,

Dr. Rick Muma

President of Wichita State University