

WSU News

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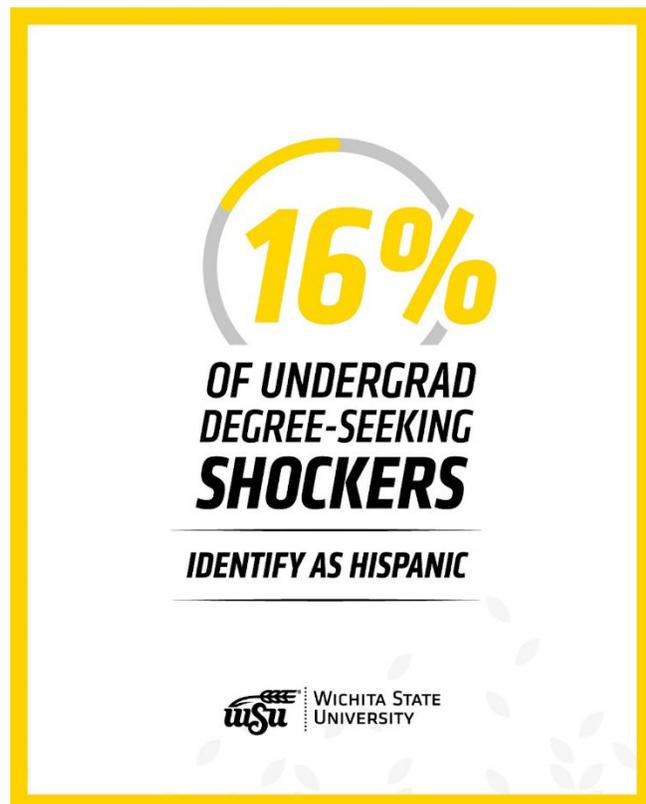
Wichita State focuses on serving students as it reaches Emerging Hispanic Serving Institution status

By Paul Suellentrop

- Wichita State's fall enrollment and its rising number of Hispanic students make it an Emerging Hispanic Serving Institution.
- Wichita State's goal is to reach status as a Hispanic Serving Institution by the end of the decade.
- Supporting Hispanic students, and by extension all students, with academic services, activities and diverse faculty is an important part of Wichita State's plans.

Wichita State University earned status as an Emerging Hispanic Serving Institution when fall 2022 enrollment numbers show that 16% of students identify as Hispanic.

That is an important milestone on the way to the university's goal of reaching the 25% necessary to earn the federal government's designation as an HSI by the end of this decade.



Wichita State University reached Emerging Hispanic Serving Institution status when fall 2022 enrollment numbers passed the 15% threshold for students identifying as Hispanic.

The journey to that goal, however, is about much more than numbers. As Wichita State attracts and retains Hispanic students, its ability to help all students will improve.

“We are putting a lot of emphasis on the word ‘serving,’” said Executive Vice President and Provost Shirley Lefever. “It’s not simply about increasing the number of Hispanic students here. It’s really about what are we doing to make sure our students are successful here at WSU.”

The HSI classification would open the potential for additional federal funding to expand academic programs and support Hispanic students with scholarships and services.

“We’re really doubling down on aligning our resources to meet the needs of our growing student population,” said Teri Hall, vice president for Student Affairs. “In that process, we are also focusing on the specific needs of our students who identify as Hispanic.”

Wichita State’s goal to earn HSI status comes as the Hispanic population in Wichita and Sedgwick County is growing and as the university increases admissions effort in Texas and Oklahoma. It aligns with the priority of making college education accessible and affordable.

“As more Hispanic students hear about Wichita State, hear about the programs and services we are offering at Wichita State, more students are going to come,” Hall said. “As the Hispanic population in Kansas and this part of the Midwest continues to grow, it is critical that we have the resources to serve them. Sixteen percent is a number. What’s more important for me is that I want to make sure that we’re an institution that truly supports students, and in this case, Hispanic students in particular. I want it to be seen as a philosophy and a space we reach. We’re at 16%, or 25% eventually, because of all we do to help our Hispanic students be successful.”



Wichita State's fall enrollment represent an increase of 5.1% in student headcount from 16,097 in 2021 to 16,921 in 2022. That includes 16% of students who identify as Hispanic.

To help Hispanic students, Wichita State offers many support systems and opportunities.

- 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, 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.
- Efforts continue to increase the diversity of faculty and staff and outreach to Spanish-speaking parents of students. Edil Torres Rivera, professor of Latinx and counseling, leads the Latinx Cluster Initiative. Launched in 2019, the initiative allows the university to better serve its growing number of Latinx students by hiring educators with expertise in Latinx needs.
- On Nov. 2, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion and Hispanic/Latine groups and student organizations sponsored Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) activities in the Rhatigan Student Center. Earlier this fall, six students attended the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities conference in San Diego. The students attended programs on networking, university experiences and business. All six interviewed for internships.
- Faculty from Wichita State, Friends University and Newman University are preparing for a February visit from Gina Ann Garcia, author of “Becoming Hispanic-Serving Institutions: Opportunities for Colleges and Universities.” Torres Rivera is also leading a group of Wichita State faculty, students and staff who meet regularly to discuss the university’s progress in this area.

Construction of the Shocker Success Center, an \$18.5 million transformation of the former Clinton Hall, will benefit all students by bringing together 17 student services currently housed in 10 buildings. It is scheduled to be completed in December 2023.

“Once we achieve the goal, how do we maintain it?” Torres Rivera said. “The idea is to be serving our students. The whole university is very enthusiastic about anything that has to do with diversity and inclusion.”