

March 11, 2021

House Appropriations Legislative Testimony

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Background Information

Important to this discussion is understanding that Fort Hays State University (FHSU) has engaged in online learning for more than 20 years. FHSU has traditionally charged more for distance education than for on-campus classes. Our online tuition has always been higher because of our focus on driving quality, which is why we meet the United States Distance Education's rigorous 91-point certification.

To reach and enhance our ongoing commitment to quality and sustain a competitive advantage, we invest in technology and learning management tools for learning and student support services as well as support a department, Teaching Innovation and Learning Technologies (TILT). These learning technology specialists and instructional designers provide expertise and advanced course development, faculty development, and educational technology.

Finally, please note that in any given semester, our on-campus students also take online classes. For example, in the fall of 2019, 42% of our on-campus students were also enrolled in at least one online course. In the spring of 2020, when COVID-19 hit, 51% of our on-campus students were also enrolled in at least one online course.

Did the university cancel or discontinue classes in spring 2020, summer 2020, fall 2020, or spring 2021?

FHSU did not close in spring 2020, summer 2020, fall 2020 or spring 2021. The academic calendar remained unchanged throughout each semester.

What proportion of classes were in-person, online, or hybrid for summer 2020? How and when were students notified of their course delivery?

For the past 15 years, most of our summer classes have been offered online. In summer 2019, we had 20 on-campus course sections. All of these course sections were in graduate or summer start-up programs such as massage therapy or radiologic technology.

In summer 2020, these same courses were accommodated through online learning. Of the 30 on-campus course sections that were to be offered in summer 2020, 26 moved to an online format. Four course sections were cancelled.

The transition-to-teaching on-campus orientation meeting was held remotely in July. This traditionally would have been a two- to three-day, in-person meeting on campus before resuming online courses for the program.

All students enrolled in summer 2020 classes were notified of these changes by the departments offering these courses by May.

Following the completion of the summer classes, we studied the grades our students earned and found the grade distribution for undergraduate courses from summer 2019 to summer 2020 remained consistent.

What proportion of classes were in-person, online, and hybrid for fall 2020? How and when were students notified of course delivery?

Students were notified of the fall semester plans via email on June 19, 2020. Multiple additional communications then occurred via email, Facebook live events, one-on-one conversations, and other modes. Course notations were published by July 1, 2020, so when students finalized their enrollment for the fall after July 1, 2020, they were aware of the choices they had for courses and how they would be delivered. The fall semester began on schedule on August 17.

Our fall 2020 plan:

Total On-Campus Courses (5%): Any course that required campus access to complete all learning outcomes and/or could not be delivered, even in part, via online media. These were offered in a concentrated eight-week timeframe (all hours required by the accrediting body were met) and completed by Friday, October 9. Students paid on-campus tuition for these courses.

Hybrid Courses (60%): Any course during which faculty and students met on campus to complete but also used online media to complete other learning outcomes. These were full 16-week courses. Students taking hybrid courses retained access to all on-campus resources and services. Students paid on-campus tuition for these courses.

Total Online Courses (35%): Any course that was **originally scheduled on campus**, but was completed in an online environment. These were full 16-week courses. Students taking these courses retained access to all on-campus resources and services. Students paid on-campus tuition for these courses.

Virtual Courses: These were our traditional online courses. Students paid online tuition for these courses.

Please note: The hybrid and total online courses delivered by FHSU are **not remote courses**. The online learning elements in these courses offer heightened interactivity and learning technologies specifically designed to enhance the online learning experience. Please see the attachment on the difference between online and remote learning.

Following the completion of the fall classes, we studied the grades our students earned and found the grade distribution for undergraduate courses from fall 2019 to fall 2020 remained consistent.

What proportion of classes are in-person, online, and hybrid for spring 2021? How and when were students notified of course delivery?

Students were sent information outlining the spring semester plan on September 21, 2020. All course notations were in place for students to utilize to make choices when spring pre-enrollment began in October 2020. The spring semester began as originally scheduled on January 19, 2021, and has remained unchanged. Although the notations are the same as the fall course notations, we tweaked the definitions of each notation to better equip faculty and students for expectations.

Our spring 2021 plan:

Total On-Campus Courses (3%): Students attend these classes entirely on campus. These are full 16-week classes. Students pay on-campus tuition for these courses.

Hybrid Courses (55%): These classes are a blend of remote learning and face-to-face; a minimum of 25% of the course is to be delivered face-to-face and are designed as full 16-week courses. Students pay on-campus tuition for these courses.

Total Online Courses (42%): Designed for courses that were **originally scheduled on campus**, but are offered completely online through a blend of remote and online learning and includes designated synchronous class meetings throughout the semester. These were full 16-week courses. Students pay on-campus tuition for these courses.

Virtual Courses: These are our traditional online courses. Students pay online tuition for these courses.

Please note: The hybrid and total online courses delivered by FHSU are **not remote courses**. The online learning elements in these courses offer heightened interactivity and learning technologies specifically designed to enhance the online learning experience. Please see the attachment on the difference between online and remote learning.

How were campus facilities evaluated for course delivery and what steps did the university take to meet either state or local county in-person guidelines?

FHSU facilities planning staff evaluated spaces for capacity recommendations. Classroom, lab and meeting spaces were de-densified by removing desks or covering unavailable seats/work stations before the fall semester. All spaces were configured for at least 6' social distancing. De-densified spaces have continued into the spring 2021 semester.

Additional sanitation processes were implemented to enhance safety for students, faculty, and staff. Aerosol disinfectant was used between class sessions. Sanitizing supplies were provided for each classroom, allowing students and faculty to sanitize their individual space. Masks were required. The city of Hays passed a mask requirement.

In addition to our internal COVID-19 management team, President Mason created an external COVID-19 advisory group that included the county health director, the local hospital CEO, and the local hospital chief medical director to exchange information and vet decisions. Both the county and the hospital have supported university COVID-19-related decisions and strategies.

What were Ellis county gathering limits? Summer 2020, fall 2020, spring 2021?

Ellis county did not enact specific gathering limits after the Governor’s executive order expired late last spring. As cases increased over the summer, our county health department issued numerous communications reiterating that individuals practice social distancing, avoid gatherings, and follow CDC and KDHE guidelines. The university consulted these guidelines and other industry information in developing our re-opening and campus mitigation plans for the new academic year, which were further vetted by our external COVID-19 advisory group, including the county health department.

How did the university provide course delivery for students who were quarantined or isolated? How did university handle courses for faculty who might have been quarantined or isolated?

Course delivery for students who were quarantined or isolated was handled on a case-by-case basis. Students worked individually with their faculty members through quarantine and isolation periods.

Faculty who were quarantined or isolated either had a substitute faculty member or conducted the courses through remote or online learning.

Students living in residence halls who needed to be quarantined were moved to a specific floor in one of our residence halls designated for that purpose. Students who needed to be in isolation were placed in a local hotel (funded by the Ellis county CARES money). Meals were delivered to students and our care team staff frequently checked in on our students.

What were the university’s refund policies for tuition? Did you adjust the dates when a student can seek a tuition refund in summer 2020, fall 2020, or spring 2021?

We did not adjust our tuition refund policies or dates.

Please note that refunds were provided to students required to leave the residence halls during spring break of 2020. These refunds were prorated. Total amount refunded equaled \$2,245,000.

How much did the university receive and spend from federal COVID-19 funds?

Fort Hays State University
CARES Act Expenditures
January 31, 2021

	HEERF			HEERF II		KBOR		County
	Student	Institutional	Additional	Student	Institutional	GEER	CRF	CRF
Budget	1,262,038	1,262,037	125,736	1,370,261	4,786,907	1,596,822	2,353,549	209,146
Aid to Students	1,262,038		34,057					
COVID-19 Testing and Contact Tracing		2,645					212,297	
Facilitating Distance Learning		473,850					200,202	35,378
Payroll to Public Health and Safety Employees		252,148					15,983	
PPE		263					37,530	
Public Health Expenses (Campus Safety)*		108,843					650,650	173,768
Scholarships (SGF replacement)						958,094		
Housing Refunds							1,000,000	
Other COVID Related Expenses		14,001					236,887	
Total Expenditures	1,262,038	851,750	34,057	-	-	958,094	2,353,549	209,146
Remaining Budget	-	410,287	91,679	1,370,261	4,786,907	638,728	-	-
Spring Commitments**								
Aid to Students				1,370,261	1,370,261			
Other COVID Related Expenses		100,645			250,000			
Testing and Contact Tracing		200,000						
Public Health Expenses (Campus Safety)*		109,642			650,650			
Lost Revenue Claim			91,679		2,320,000			
Scholarships (SGF Replacement)						638,728		
Projected Remaining Balance	-	-	-	-	195,996	-	-	-

*Quarantine and Isolation Expenses
**Anticipated Use

Define course modalities:

Please see the information above and the attachment.

More information is available at: <https://www.fhsu.edu/covid-19-response/faqs/academic-planning>.

Are students who take an online course charged a different tuition rate or do they have different fees than in-person courses? Do you have additional costs to recover for delivering an online course?

Tuition and fees for resident on-campus students are \$181.64 per credit and \$226.88 per credit hour for online students.

You will note in the information above that FHSU proactively ensured that our course design and tuition did not penalize our on-campus students for shifts in course delivery due to COVID-19.

Also, as indicated above, FHSU has engaged in online learning for more than 20 years, and has always charged more for distance education than on-campus classes. Our online tuition is higher to provide resources to drive the quality required to meet student needs.

We invest in technology and learning management tools for learning and student support services to reach and enhance our ongoing commitment to quality and sustain a competitive advantage. Our Teaching Innovation and Learning Technologies (TILT) department provides expertise and advances course development, faculty development, and educational technology. More information on TILT is available at: <https://fhsu.edu/learningtechnologies/>.

Were students charged an online fee if the course modality changed?

FHSU proactively ensured that our course design and tuition did not penalize our on-campus students for shifts in course delivery due to COVID-19.

Concluding Thoughts

Throughout this past year, we worked very closely with our city, county, and medical professionals to educate our students in the midst of a global pandemic. We proactively thought through our delivery strategies and business model while staying focused on student success and the accessibility and affordability for which we are known.

The KBOR university CEOs frequently met to exchange information and ideas. I am grateful to my colleagues for freely sharing their thoughts, plans, and lessons learned on their campuses as we worked together, and independently, to create safer learning environments. I am also deeply appreciative of the Kansas Board of Regents for allowing us flexibility in developing independent institutional plans during the pandemic.

As noted, our outcomes and grade distributions indicate that overall, students have performed equally well during this most unfortunate period. I am so very grateful for our students who continued to demonstrate faith in Fort Hays State University, and worked together to create an environment of respect and kindness through these challenging times.

My appreciation is also extended to our faculty and staff for their resilience and innovation in navigating a semester of uncertainty, never losing sight of our enduring commitment to caring for our students. Simply put, the faculty and staff of FHSU rose to the challenge this semester and continued to deliver robust support services and outstanding teaching and learning experiences in thoughtful, impactful, and personal ways.

Finally, we value our partnership with you, our elected leaders. I am confident that together we will help Kansans continue to gain access to an affordable education, grow our businesses, and help our communities throughout the state flourish – as our state motto reminds... to the stars.

Thank you for your service to our great state.