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## Putting students first:

### **K-STATE WORKING TO ENSURE FIRST-YEAR STUDENT SUCCESS WITH K-STATE FIRST**

MANHATTAN — How do college students have a great college experience?

The answer at Kansas State University is with a great first year.

Making the first year at K-State a successful one is what K-State First is all about, according to directors Greg Eiselein and Emily Lehning. The program will launch this fall.

"K-State First is an integrated effort to create an outstanding university experience for every first-year student at K-State," said Eiselein, a professor of English and Coffman University Distinguished Teaching Scholar.

"The program provides new students with a transition to college-level learning and college life in four important ways: by fostering campus community and feelings of belonging; offering opportunities for diverse activities and interactions; raising academic expectations with engagement and compassion; and empowering students with a strong sense of personal responsibility and social agency," said Lehning, assistant vice president for student life and director of new student services.

"One of my goals as president of Kansas State University has been to make the first-year experience at K-State one of the best in the nation," said Kirk Schulz, K-State president. "K-State First is an advocate for our first-year students and an important source for connection and communication among the various programs and opportunities we offer our incoming students to succeed."

Four core programs, all open to every first-year student, make up K-State First:

\* CAT Communities, K-State's learning communities program. CAT stands for Connecting Across Topics. CAT learning communities are designed around a student's interests and offer mentoring from both a professor and an advanced undergraduate learning assistant with the same interests. Students also get the chance to meet other students and study together.

\* First-year seminars, which help students make the transition to university courses and college-level learning. The seminars are regular, academic and general education classes, but class sizes are smaller and are taught by many of K-State's best and most experienced faculty members.

(more)

\* K-State Book Network, the university reading program for new incoming students that selects a common book for the academic year and coordinates classroom and campus activities to correspond with the reading. The network's inaugural selection is "The Hunger Games" by Suzanne Collins.

\* Guide to Personal Success, a program that matches first-year students with a faculty member, staff member, graduate student or K-State alum who has knowledge of university resources and can help guide students during their transition to campus.

At the heart of K-State First is a group of dedicated teachers, said Betsy Cauble, president of the K-State Faculty Senate and head of the department of sociology, anthropology and social work.

"The innovative thinking of our faculty and their desire to make first-year education here the best in the nation have guided this effort from the start," Cauble said. "I am delighted that so many of our most talented, award-winning faculty members are teaching in this program."

K-State First's efforts are overseen by April Mason, K-State provost and senior vice president, and Pat Bosco, vice president for student life and dean of students. Feedback from K-State students, faculty and the K-State First Advisory Workgroup also will help guide the program.

"From its origins in a 2006-2007 task force and the pilot studies of the first-year seminar concept in 2008 and 2009, K-State First has been committed to excellent teaching as well as research on and assessment of our courses and programs," Mason said. "K-State faculty, staff and students have been committed to making K-State First a reality and will all play an essential role in ensuring its success."

More information on K-State First is available at <http://www.k-state.edu/first/>.

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