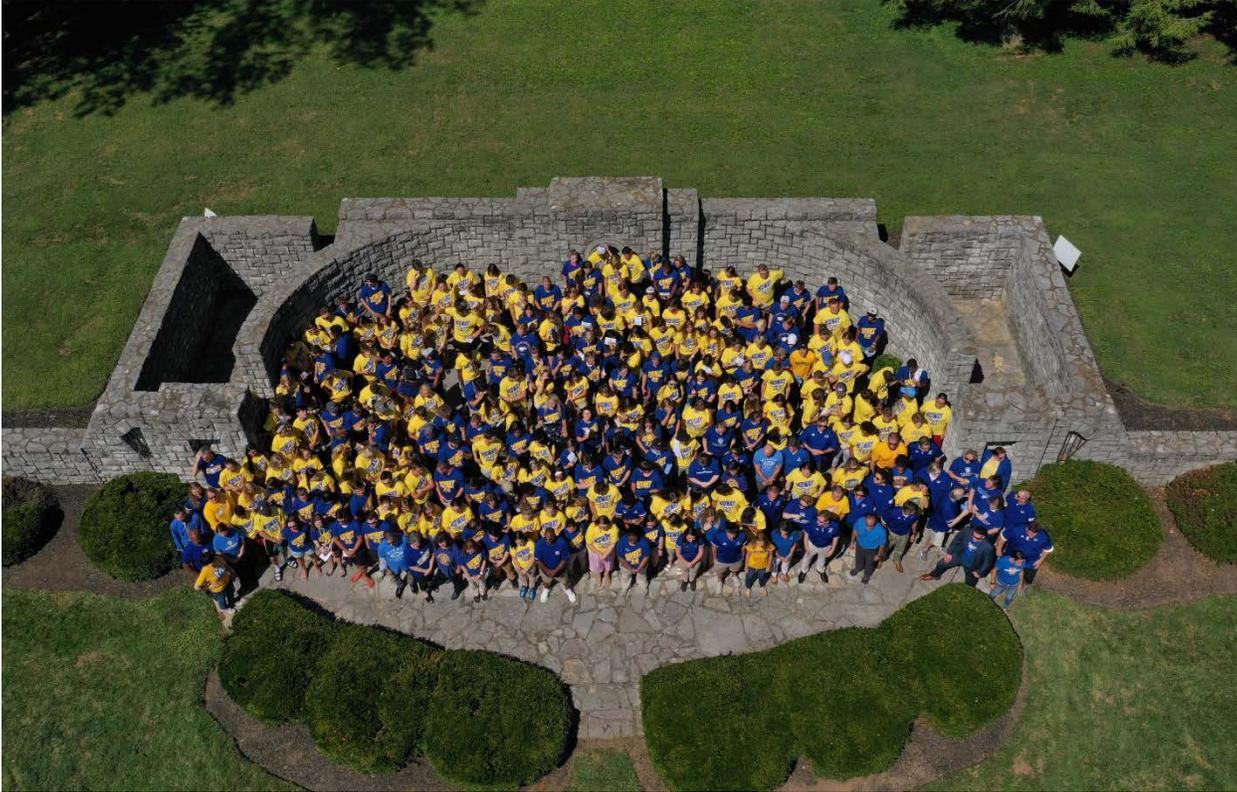


Midway University welcomes over 600 students to campus

August 28, 2019, Bob Vlach, Woodford Sun Staff



Midway University's student population has "grown much more rapidly" than anticipated as approximately 645 "traditional daytime" students were welcomed to its campus when the 2019-20 academic year began last week, President Dr. John Marsden said.

"In my 20-year career in higher education (at four private institutions) I have never seen such rapid growth in such a short period of time," said Marsden, who came to Midway University in February 2013.

Marsden said the on-campus daytime population has grown by more than 400 students since Midway University became a co-education institution in the fall of 2016. Welcoming men and adding new athletic programs to its campus were significant in that growth, but many other factors are contributing to the increased enrollment, he told the Sun last Friday.

"Everyone wants to back a winner, and right now we're on an upward trajectory," Marsden said. He cited an affordable tuition, few increases in tuition – made possible with "very careful financial stewardship" – and a desirable location as other factors working in Midway University's favor in terms of student growth.

While being near I-64 and close to several Central Kentucky cities is a desirable location for commuter students, Midway University added housing (for 58 students) in Pinkerton Hall this year to accommodate the growing number of students who want to live on campus – from approximately 314 last year to 370 this year, Marsden said.

"There seems to be a desire among this cohort of high school graduates to live on campus. And we did not want to have any kind of obstacle that would curtail our momentum," he said.

Because its traditional student enrollment numbers remain below 700 and a classroom size typically

is around 14 to 16 students, Marsden said Midway University continues to offer a “personalized learning environment. They don’t want to be in a lecture hall with 100 or 200 students. They like the fact that everyone knows who they are ... And students are also getting an opportunity to play on a sports team, which might not be possible at a much larger institution.”

With market research showing only 2 percent of high school seniors desiring single-sex education, Midway University’s transformation to a co-education institution was a needed change, but not unprecedented, Marsden pointed out.

“We go through periods of reinvention: the Kentucky Female Orphan School becoming a junior college; phasing out the high school, becoming a four-year college, becoming a university ...

“... This was another period of reinvention for us. Not only did this (recent transformation) help out our financial situation and stabilized us – it also increased vibrancy on campus,” said Marsden, who credited Midway University’s board of trustees for supporting the transformation into a co-education institute that led to rapid on-campus growth.

Hunter Field House, with an anticipated completion date of March 2020, and a new baseball field, which should be ready for play in October, have generated excitement on campus.

As the field house’s beams rise above the Thomas R. Post tennis center, anticipation increases for the auxiliary gym, weight room and elevated walking track that are coming.

There’s a greater sense of school spirit on campus – partly due to the athletic programs (there will now be 23 teams with the addition of men’s track and field, and men’s and women’s bowling), but also because of other student-driven activities, Marsden said.

While new academic programs have been added over the years, Midway University continues to support teachers in an underpaid profession (and its original purpose to educate young women to become teachers) by offering lower tuition rates for a master of education degree, Marsden said. He said the institution recently saw a dip in enrollment for that degree, which he largely attributed to a change in state legislation that had required a teacher in Kentucky to earn a master’s degree within a specific timeframe.

Midway University’s equine program continues to grow with about 58 percent of its students from out of state. “So they’re finding us and coming here for our equine program,” Ellen Gregory, vice president of marketing and communications, said.

Other academic and athletic programs are also drawing students from outside of Kentucky (33 different states) to Midway University’s campus, according to Marsden. He cited nursing, business administration, equine, biology and sports management as Midway’s most popular programs.

The courses are taught by 32 fulltime faculty and numerous adjunct or part-time faculty, he said.

In addition to daytime (residential and commuter) students, Midway University has evening (predominately online) undergraduate and graduate students, as well as dual-credit high school students (about 350 to 380 from four counties), who earn college credit at a much-lower cost to their parents.

Gregory said her daughter Ginny, a Woodford County High School junior, is taking a dual-credit communications course at WCHS. She said it’s “a little bit more challenging. ... And (it gives my daughter) that taste of what college is like.”