



On behalf of all members of The Paleontological Society, we would like to express serious concerns about the future of the Sternberg Museum of Natural History and its fossil collections. The Paleontological Society, founded in 1908, is an international nonprofit organization to advance knowledge of paleontology and understanding of the evolution of life through research, education, and public outreach.

The Sternberg Museum of Natural History contains some of the oldest and most important paleontological collections in the Great Plains region, beginning with Charles H. and George M. Sternberg in 1867 and continuing today. The wealth of nearly half a million fossils in the scientific collections stored at the Sternberg are priceless and represent one of the earliest eras of fossil collecting in the central United States. Significantly, Sternberg's fossil collections are just as crucial to science now as they were over 100 years ago. New species continue to be described from the collections, directly informing our understanding of how global change may alter both marine and terrestrial ecosystems in the future. Fossil collections such as this can never be replaced nor reconstructed once abandoned or dispersed. The loss of these collections is a loss to science, as well as to the long legacy of scientific endeavor that is the foundation of this nation's natural history.

In addition to the unparalleled research collections cared for by the dedicated collections staff, the Sternberg is internationally known for its Science Camps, in which multiple generations of students have learned important scientific skills and been inspired to interact and learn from the natural world around them. Furthermore, the Sternberg is vital to the FHSU Museum Studies Certification program available in the Department of Geosciences, in which students work directly in a functioning museum environment. There are very few places in the United States where this type of certification is available, so removing access to this rare opportunity for FHSU students will result in an educational deficit that cannot be replaced. Rural areas, like western Kansas, have limited educational and scientific resources available, and the Sternberg is a vital part of creating opportunities for the public and FHSU students to learn and engage with the natural history of the region.

As such, the Paleontological Society strongly urges Fort Hays State University not to abandon their partnership with the Sternberg Museum after more than 100 years of world-class research and education. Fort Hays State University's mission is to "provide accessible quality education to Kansas, the nation, and the world through an innovative community of teacher-scholars and professionals to develop engaged global citizen-leaders". To close the Sternberg and remove its fossil collections will cause irreparable damage to the paleontological history and scientific reputation of not only the state of Kansas, but to the United States as a whole. We implore FHSU leadership to reconsider closing the Sternberg Museum, and to continue to provide both the public and the scientific community with tangible opportunities to engage with our natural world.

Sincerely,

Leadership of the Paleontological Society