

Academic & issues & ideas

Notes from the Wichita State University
Office of Academic Affairs and Research



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For the latest information and
communication from the the
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www.wichita.edu/provost



HIGHER EDUCATION *and State Funding*

Like most states, Kansas is facing substantial budget challenges. If current revenue trends continue, the state budget is forecast to be out of balance by a whopping billion dollars by 2010. Most state agencies, including universities, have reduced their budgets in this fiscal year. Clearly, all of us who receive state funding are very actively planning for budget reductions.

Our goal at Wichita State is to hold true to our commitment to be accountable to the students, faculty, alumni and community that we serve, a precept central to President Beggs' vision of the university. So, our planning focuses on maintaining core values, essential programs, and, most importantly, the highest quality in our teaching, research and outreach activities.

FACULTY AND STAFF INVOLVEMENT

Fortunately, we have a superb and dedicated faculty who understand what quality means and how to deliver it. Because of this great reservoir of commitment and creativity, we expect to continue to nurture innovation even in these uncertain economic times. Over the past year, faculty and staff at the university have invested an enormous amount of their creative energy in exhaustive analyses of key programs to move the university forward.

For example:

- The Globalization Task Force, which included members of the community, examined how we should operate in the global, technology-based economy.
- The Michael Tilford Working Group, which involves faculty and staff from all

of the university divisions, continues to examine how we can nurture and employ the great diversity of the Wichita area.

- A group of exceptionally dedicated faculty worked for more than a year to develop a new model for honors education that will better serve the increasing number of highly qualified students coming to Wichita State University.
- A task force of faculty and staff analyzed the national movement in e-learning and developed a set of recommendations and operating practices to guide our work in that area.
- A small group of professionals appointed by Dr. Ron Kopita and me have worked for over a year (and continue to work) to understand our enrollment and financial aid dynamics with the goal of increasing access to our educational

FOR YOU AT WSU: On Thursday, April 2, the Center for Entrepreneurship's spring series concludes with Jeff Turner, president and CEO of Spirit Aerosystems Inc., discussing corporate entrepreneurship. The series is free and open to the public. The session is on campus from 3-4 p.m. in Devlin Hall, Room 107.

ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH NEWS ON THE WEB

<http://wichita.edu/provost> is the Internet gateway for news and information about academic affairs and research at WSU.

On the site you can find:

- Video excerpts from the Channel 13 program, "Wichita State & the World." Recent shows included Prof. Teresa Radebaugh talking with Provost Gary L. Miller about aging in Kansas and sculptor Tom Otterness and Ulrich Museum Director Patricia McDonnell talking about Otterness' new campus sculpture.
- An archive of the Provost's writings, including an op-ed piece published this year on biotechnology initiatives.
- Reports of university task forces, such as those on diversity, globalization, first year students and the university honors program.
- A photo gallery from campus events.
- Past issues of this newsletter, and much more.

programs.

• And, beginning this past fall, an extraordinarily large group of faculty and staff agreed to participate in the Foundations of Excellence Program, a program designed to give us a full understanding of how our curricula and practices affect the likelihood of students completing their degrees.

In total, this work involved well over 100 people and months of effort. The recommendations of the groups have and will make us more responsive to our students and give us more capacity to interact with the community. In short, the work will enhance our roadmap to accountability and increase the value of the university to Kansas and the nation. The indomitable spirit of the Wichita State University faculty and staff buoy us in these uncertain times. But, will it be enough to overcome what I believe is a dangerous trend in the public's view of higher education?

DECLINING STATE FUNDING

A decade ago, state government funded more than 50% of WSU's total budget. This year the state share has fallen to under 35%.

State support for higher education has declined as much or more in every state. Indeed, some of my colleagues in public higher education in other states refer to their institutions as "state-located" rather than "state-supported."

This decline in state support represents

a sea change in our view of higher education. Historically, state governments have subsidized public universities because there was a broad recognition of the benefit of having a highly educated population.

College graduates make more money and, so, they pay more taxes. They vote more regularly, provide more volunteer service to their communities and do not rely as much on state support during aging because they are generally healthier.

Universities, especially research universities, like Wichita State, significantly support the state economy through their research and development activities. But, more and more, the university degree has come to be seen as a subsidy for individual advancement rather than an investment in society as a whole. Such a view makes it easier to trade off higher education for other state needs during difficult economic times.

Every day, President Beggs and I have the great fortune to experience the nearly limitless potential of our faculty to not only educate individuals but, perhaps just as importantly, provide broad benefits to society. Embracing both of those functions of higher education is essential to maintaining our position as the very best university system in the world. In these budget times, we hope for such enlightenment.

Gary L. Miller

LEARJET AWARDS NIAR LARGEST EVER WSU RESEARCH CONTRACT

The National Institute for Aviation Research at Wichita State has been awarded the largest contract in university history.

NIAR will be involved in FAA certification of the planned Learjet 85 mid-sized business jet.

The contract is expected to total between \$10 million and \$20 million, said John Tomblin, NIAR executive director.

David Coleal, Bombardier Learjet's vice president and general manager, said: "This will be the largest, fastest Learjet ever built. We're very fortunate to have one of the nation's leading composite centers here at Wichita State to work with us on

this innovative project."

"Learjet has long been a supporter of technology advancements within NIAR," said Ralph Acs, vice president, Learjet 85. "This new partnership will strengthen this relationship and supports the plan to make the Learjet 85 a technologically advanced aircraft."

Provost Gary L. Miller said, "This is outstanding recognition of the Wichita State model of developing research and testing capabilities directly in response to current and anticipated industry and government needs."

Learjet has been a core member of NIAR's Industry Advisory Council since its inception



in 2002. The council, made up of the vice presidents of engineering at Learjet, Boeing IDS, Cessna, Hawker Beechcraft, and Spirit AeroSystems, provides input and feedback on the research focus and laboratory capabilities at NIAR.