A crucial collaboration for WSU’s survival

This longer-than-usual message is intended to address misgivings we have heard and read about the Innovation Campus and refocus the university community on utilizing the tremendous potential we have here for research, teaching, service and community engagement. I welcome honest disagreement and thoughtful questions about our plans and actions. You can send follow-up comments or questions to president@wichita.edu.

I am pleased to learn that Interim Provost Rick Muma is in the early stages of discussing with faculty new ways of tapping into the full breadth of the Innovation Campus concept. I welcome that discussion and would encourage other campus senates to consider their own Innovation Campus initiatives.

The ideas for Innovation Campus grew from close observation of similar research parks at other universities, conversations with colleagues, community and business leaders and from Wichita State’s 2013 Strategic Plan. The strategic plan, http://wichita.edu/wsustrategy, honors Wichita State’s history, recognizes its strengths and intelligently addresses the difficult circumstances in which public universities now find themselves.

The strategic plan is ambitious, and the journey to achieving its vision and mission cannot always be a comfortable one. The path we follow may be different than ones WSU has traveled before. That’s because the rapidly changing demands on universities, the dwindling resources to support public higher education and the continuing quest for excellence, relevance and growth all require both sacrifice and risk to achieve a secure future.

The concept of the Innovation Campus – collaboration, applied learning and research – is not just restricted to the 120 acres that used to be Braeburn Golf Course. It is our goal that the spirit of the Innovation Campus comes to permeate every aspect of WSU, transforming the entire enterprise into a student-centered and innovation-driven university.
Innovation Campus itself has become controversial in some quarters because it involves public-private partnerships, known as P3s, that have been common in American higher education for decades, but are still relatively new to many in Kansas.

The University of Kansas has its own large P3 development project underway, known as the Central District Development project. It’s a $350 million project undertaken with a single private firm to build science facilities, student space, student housing, parking, utilities and associated infrastructure.

The Association of University Research Parks (AURP) defines a university research park, such as Innovation Campus, as a property-based venture with these characteristics:

- Master plans property designed for research and commercialization
- Creates partnerships with universities and research institutions
- Encourages the growth of new companies
- Translates technology
- Drives technology-led economic development

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS AND RESEARCH PARKS
Public-private partnerships are being used by universities in many, if not all, states and in many countries around the world. Our Innovation Campus is one of approximately 170 university research/technology/business parks that are members of the Association of University Research Parks (AURP).

Most university members are research universities, and most parks have been developed since the early 1980s as a result of changes in public policy regarding technology transfer, but some are substantially older (including Stanford and Cornell). Al Link, a widely respected researcher in this field, describes them this way:

A university-related research park is a cluster of technology-based organizations (consisting primarily of private-sector research companies but also of selected federal and state research agencies and not-for-profit research foundations) that locate on or near a university campus in order to benefit from its knowledge base and research activities.

A university is motivated to develop a research park by the possibility of financial gain associated with technology transfer, the opportunity to have faculty and students interact at the applied level with research organizations, and a desire to contribute to regional economic growth. Research organizations are motivated by the opportunity for access to eminent faculty and their students and university research equipment, as well as the possibility of fostering research synergies (http://issues.org/20-1/realnumbers-13/).

PRIVATE-PRIVATE COLLABORATION FOR PUBLIC GOOD
Innovation Campus buildings and infrastructure are financed through a mix of public and private dollars: commitments from the State of Kansas, City of Wichita, Sedgwick County and other organizations and companies that believe Wichita State’s vision, mission and goals are critical to the future of the region and Kansas.
This type of collaboration with industry and community partners is now crucial for public universities to thrive.

WSU hasn’t sold a single square foot of land to create Innovation Campus. The university has no intention of selling its land, nor could it without legislative approval. The P3 model minimizes WSU’s financial burden and risk while ensuring a valuable return on investment to the university because, at the end of each lease, the university acquires the improvements on the land for its own use.

Following the pattern of other research universities across the nation, we created a non-profit organization, Wichita State Innovation Alliance, as a vehicle to focus attention on Innovation Campus and pursue partnerships to benefit the university and its students.

Through WSIA, WSU leases pockets of its land to private partners and, in turn, these private partners develop, with private money, the structures on the land that ultimately will help us achieve educational, vocational and collaborative opportunities for students, faculty and staff.

With this background in mind, the following provides additional knowledge and resources aimed at explaining and clarifying recent topics that have been discussed in the media about the Innovation Campus.

**HOW ARE THE PROJECTS FUNDED?**

Since the inception of the Innovation Campus, there have been inaccurate claims in newspapers and on social media that the university has circumvented the state bidding process. The truth is that WSU has followed and will continue to follow state law and KBOR policy for every project on the Innovation Campus today and in the future.

When the university intends to spend more than $1 million of State General Fund dollars for any capital improvement or financing, it is required to both seek and obtain the approval of KBOR and put those projects out for bid. To date, the projects both on and off the physical Innovation Campus site (including the parking garage located next to the Rhatigan Student Center) that fall into this category have been awarded to three different contractors, based on their low bids. Dondlinger has been awarded $32 million in work; Crossland has been awarded $11.5 million; and Nowak has been awarded $970,000.

In addition to these publicly funded projects, the Innovation Campus is home to several privately funded projects. These projects are the result of private developers responding to the general invitation extended to any and all financially qualified individuals or groups who have an interest in partnering with the university. This invitation can be found online.
Innovation Campus Funding Overview

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Publicly Funded (State General Funds)</th>
<th>Privately Funded (Industry Development)</th>
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<td>Braeburn Square</td>
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<td>Business School</td>
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<td>Crash Dynamics Lab (in design, not yet bid)</td>
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<td>Element by Westin Hotel</td>
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<td>Experiential Engineering Building</td>
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<td>GoCreate**</td>
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<td>Law Enforcement Training Center***</td>
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<td>Starbucks</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Flats at WSU (Phase I and II)</td>
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<td>Wonder School</td>
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<td>YMCA/Student Health and Wellness Center****</td>
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*Business School fundraising underway

**GoCreate construction part of EEB public funding; interior privately funded

***LETTC partnership with City of Wichita and Sedgwick County

****YMCA/Wellness Center supported, in part, with student fees

There has been no violation of open process requirements on any publicly funded project on Innovation Campus. We understand and expect to be subject to public scrutiny. As we work, with your help, to sustain the university into the future, we will continue to achieve progress with transparency.

While Innovation Campus has experienced much growth as of late, below is a more in-depth examination of are three projects that have drawn particular attention – Wonder, YMCA and The Flats.

**WONDER SCHOOL**

Most people on campus probably haven’t been in the 1953 building that formerly housed the university’s print shop. Last year, the creators of a new private school began talking with university representatives about the possibility of leasing space on campus for their startup school, with the idea that if their concept succeeded, they would eventually need to build a larger building on Innovation Campus or elsewhere.

So why locate at WSU? The school’s concept for an experience-based learning environment is consistent with what the university is creating with the Innovation Campus. Wonder founders report that they have received a strong positive response from parents of potential students and educators interested in joining the Wonder school.

As is the case with most of the buildings on the Innovation Campus, the university reaps the benefit of a newly built (or, in this case, fully remodeled) space without bearing any financial risk. During Wonder’s occupancy of the university facility, it will pay monthly rent to the university. And, in the event that the school is so much of a success that it outgrows these
temporary quarters, Wonder will turn the fully remodeled facility (an investment of over $1 million) back over to the university without any further obligation from the university. At this point, the university will be able to make use of this modern facility for any suitable purpose, probably as an innovation center.

YMCA/STUDENT HEALTH AND WELLNESS CENTER
WSU is excited for the YMCA to bring a facility to campus that will provide students, faculty, staff, university partners and the community with more health and wellness opportunities, including expanded spaces for Student Health Services and the Counseling Center. The university has developed a collaborative relationship with the YMCA, providing faculty, staff and students an opportunity to be engaged in the planning process by discussing and providing input into the facility needs and design in order to elevate student health services and facilities. The YMCA has primary responsibility for construction financing.

There have been suggestions and insinuations that WSU is more involved in this project than it should be, considering it is private development. For example, one media report raised questions about a discussion between WSU and the YMCA over concern that the YMCA (not WSU) would need to construct an extensive and expensive storm water detention pond or underground tank. These are very typical conversations and concerns in property development. As it turned out, engineers devised a low-cost solution that did not require a pond or tank.

THE FLATS
The Flats at WSU, developed and owned by a private company, was initially designed to be a private housing option for students and non-students. The university capitalized on the window of opportunity to close an aging student housing facility (Fairmount Towers), whose upkeep was becoming unsustainable and whose location was considered too out-of-the-way by some potential residents and their parents.

The Flats provides upgraded and expanded campus housing and brings students into the heart of campus where they are active, engaged and connected. We know from published studies that student retention is most successful when students make a social connection at the university during their first semester. These connections are made through participation in student groups, organized activities, sports, etc. For this reason, location and programming are very important aspects of student housing. Programming involves Student Affairs and Housing and Residence Life, and includes study groups, training, bonding and teambuilding activities.

At Fairmount Towers, it was difficult for students to make these social connections because they were removed from the main campus. At The Flats, students live where they connect; their location is more central to university activities, and their living space is designed to provide opportunities for small group interaction, creating the perfect atmosphere for “points of collision” and student retention. It has been more successful than we hoped and imagined.

Because of this success, we sought and received approval from KBOR for a second phase of Innovation Campus housing. The developers have received feedback from staff and students for lower-cost, space-efficient housing units. We support this expansion and expect construction to begin in the next several months for occupancy in mid-2019.
THE END IS JUST THE BEGINNING

We want you to know that we hear you. We hear your questions, your concerns and your desire for more discussion and transparency. We thank you for caring deeply enough about this university to hold us accountable.

While our processes have always been within the boundaries of state law and policy, we want to leave no room for doubt. We are committed to sharing the university’s story with you and we want to hear your stories and answer your questions and concerns.

Please make time to visit and enjoy the new facilities on the east side of campus, including the walking paths. Changes can be seen nearly every day and we believe they will benefit the student body, faculty/staff, community, region and state for many years to come.
Women’s History Month is an annual declared month that highlights the contributions of women to events in history and contemporary society.

Our history is filled with hidden figures who persevered to promote equity for women in our nation and community.

Throughout women’s history, there are heroes both known and unknown. From Harriett Tubman to Sheryl Sandberg, these unique stories and journeys have made an immeasurable impact on society.

The great Maya Angelou said, “When you learn -- teach. When you get -- give,” and this lesson applies to all aspects of life. As faculty, students and staff, we are challenged on a daily basis to overcome gender stereotypes in order to build a better community.

Trailblazing women have served in society as leaders, mentors and educators, and have made a difference in the lives of others.

As the first African American female vice president at Wichita State, I am filled with gratitude as I reflect on the sacrifices of women that paved the way for my success. In the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, we are excited to celebrate and promote women’s history as we strive to reduce the societal barriers of gender inequality.

Shocker Pride!

Dr. Marche Fleming-Randle
Vice president, Diversity and Community Engagement

"You may not always have a comfortable life and you will not always be able to solve all of the world's problems at once, but don't ever underestimate the importance you can have, because history has shown us that courage can be contagious and hope can take on a life of its own."

- Michelle Obama
Two Wichita State professors are leading the way on a multi-university research project funded by a $1,130,121 NASA grant, including $380,121 as a match.

Gisuk Hwang is the project lead, in collaboration with Rajeev Nair, both of whom are assistant professors in the Department of Mechanical Engineering.

The goal of the research is to improve the water evaporation/condensation process in NASA’s next-generation spacecraft technologies, allowing for more effective cooling and water production systems for extending human presence in space.

Existing evaporator/condenser technology has limitations and has resulted in complex and expensive spacecraft, spacesuits and habitat designs.

Using laser-sintered, novel capillary structures, the research team will work to develop efficient and compact cooling and water production systems by separating liquid from vapor flow.
The capillary structures could also pave a pathway for sustainable energy, environmental and industrial systems on Earth, including efficient electricity production, water boilers, water desalination, smart buildings, electronics packing and food production, Hwang says.

Along with Hwang and Nair, the research team is comprised of researchers from Kansas State University, the University of Kansas, the NASA Jet Propulsion Lab and the Glenn Research Center, as well as WireCo Inc., the Kansas Cosmosphere and various outreach centers at WSU, KSU and KU.

“This new research infrastructure in the state will stimulate research activities and empower a future STEM workforce to solve research challenges for NASA and Kansas,” says Hwang.
Universities are facing a seemingly impossible crisis over how to offer accessible teaching that’s individualized, yet affordable. Shocking as it might seem, there is one catch-all answer that could be the remedy: Cut the campus loose.

» Is the future of the university is up in the air?