Since coming to Wichita State University in the summer of 2006, I have advanced the notion that we are unique in Kansas as the state’s only urban serving research university.

What do I mean by this and how does the urban serving mission drive our activities? WSU is one of a growing number of America’s most prestigious and important universities that form the Coalition of Urban Serving Universities. The group works very closely with another group we’re active in, the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges (NASULGC).

Recognizing the importance of urban areas as centers of increasing population growth and economic development, the NASULGC Commission on the Urban Agenda and the Coalition have joined to promote an urban higher education agenda.

The Urban Serving Mission

The urban agenda for higher education includes three major components:

1. Develop Human Capital
   The goal is to create dynamic educational opportunities to meet 21st century workforce demands through higher education innovation and creative partnerships between universities and urban school districts.

2. Strengthen Communities
   The focus of this goal is to develop partnership strategies to revitalize urban neighborhoods.

3. Promote Public Health
   The goal is to reduce disparities in health and health care by developing a culturally competent urban health workforce.

The opportunity for WSU to work within this important framework in the greater Wichita area is enormous. All of the components are in place. We have a College of Education that is already fully involved with one of the largest urban school districts in the country. Our College of Health Professions is at the center of providing leading edge professional health care training with direct application to the urban environment. Our College of Engineering supports and partners with the local aviation industry, the largest economic force in Kansas. The Barton School of Business is poised to become the most important nexus of economic growth.

For the latest information and communication from the Provost, check out:
www.wichita.edu/provost

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and education in the region. The programs of the Fairmount College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and the College of Fine Arts directly address local needs. There are many examples of how we are advancing each of the elements of this mission through creative partnerships and outreach activities. Let me briefly describe two of the most exciting, both of which leverage our internationally recognized expertise in advanced materials and composites.

**Via Christi – WSU**

The partnership between WSU’s National Institute for Aviation Research and Via Christi Orthopedic Research Institute has resulted in the creation of the Center for Innovation in Biomaterials and Orthopedic Research (CIBOR). CIBOR is an industry driven, research-based collaboration to design and commercialize external and internal orthopedic and orthopedic support devices from advanced composite materials. CIBOR has the potential to create a new industry in south-central Kansas using the manufacturing infrastructure that already exists for the aviation industry. This will create new jobs and add to the Kansas economy in a significant way. The CIBOR idea has been proposed for funding to the Kansas Bioscience Authority.

**Wichita Area Technical College – WSU**

The continued prosperity of the Kansas economy depends on meeting the pressing need for a highly trained workforce in aviation and health care. Rapid innovation in these fields requires a training approach that responds quickly to changes in the industry. The university has joined with the Wichita Area Technical College to develop and deliver a research-based training paradigm at the new National Center for Aviation Training soon to be built at Jabara Airport. The facility will be one of only a handful of training facilities in the world that combine advanced basic and applied research in the same space as technical training. Researchers from WSU will collaborate to develop training modules to be delivered by WATC. New degree completion routes will be developed to encourage highly qualified WATC students to continue for WSU degrees in engineering, engineering technology and other fields. Training programs will be designed to respond instantly to the new needs of the manufacturing floor.

There are many other activities that address our unique mission as the only urban serving research university in Kansas. I plan to write about some of them in this space in the coming months.

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**Gary L. Miller**

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**FOR YOU AT WSU:** Beech Wind Tunnel tours, 3-6 p.m. Oct. 10. Information: 978-5597