

WSU News

August 05, 2020 **RESEARCH** **INNOVATION CAMPUS** **STUDENTS**
NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION
FACULTY/STAFF **COMMUNITY** **DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION**
APPLIED LEARNING **CONVERGENCE SCIENCES**

WSU Board of Trustees approves next step to house the National Institute for Digital Transformation as part of its new convergence sciences initiative

By WSU Strategic Communications



In an effort to help diversify and grow the economy – while providing an important platform for creating new academic and applied programs for students – Wichita State University is moving forward on a facility to house the National Institute for Digital Transformation (NIDT) as part of WSU's Convergence Sciences initiative.

A major building block for this effort was supported last week when the WSU Board of Trustees agreed to allocate \$532,000 a year for the term of the bonds that will fund the development of the facility – an approximately 30,000-square-foot building on the Innovation Campus.

Research and partnerships created in the facility will be focused around the convergence of faculty and students from many different WSU departments across the university for the sole purpose of developing research in a broad range of economic sectors, including the high-tech sectors, health sector, manufacturing, defense and logistics while supporting the aviation and aerospace industries.

NIDT would be based on the model and strengths of Wichita State's highly successful National Institute for Aviation Research (NIAR). Similar to NIAR, the new institute will work with Wichita State faculty and existing industry and government partners.

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Pierre Harter

Recent layoffs in the local aviation sector have reinforced the critical need to diversify the Kansas economy. This work will focus on developing new and innovative digital technologies including artificial intelligence, machine learning and cyber security that in addition to supporting existing businesses but also support the creation and recruitment of new ventures in Kansas.

“To continue to thrive, Kansas must successfully grow its current industries and expand into new and emerging technologies that will

attract and retain talent in our great state,” says Wichita State President Dr. Jay Golden. “Wichita State is a nationally recognized innovation leader, and our plans that catalyzes scientific discovery and innovation to grow our economy is right in step with our mission to be an essential educational, cultural and economic driver for Kansas and the greater public good.”

Pierre Harter, chair of the Wichita State Board of Trustees and Director of Advanced Manufacturing Strategy for Spirit AeroSystems Inc., says the board agreed that work done in the facility would provide far-reaching educational and economic benefits to the students and faculty of Wichita State, as well as to the city of Wichita, the surrounding region and the state of Kansas.

“First and foremost, the WSU Board of Trustees recognizes that the students of WSU will benefit from the opportunities for applied learning at the NIDT through government and industry sponsored research, as well as the opportunity to collaborate with the many companies that will be involved in the NIDT ecosystem,” Harter says. “Additionally, the NIDT will provide the city, region and state with a center focused on a critical need for nearly every industry in the 21st century: digital transformation. This is truly an exciting addition to the WSU Innovation Campus and will serve the student, faculty and people of Kansas well for generations to come.”

The NIDT aligns with the university’s ongoing work of building out data science educational offerings in the College of Engineering and expanding it to the W. Frank Barton School of Business and the Fairmount College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and eventually the College of Health Professions, says Rick Muma, Wichita State executive vice president and Provost.

“The goal is to align the curriculum across the university to technology that allows students more opportunities to work in fields using data such as aviation, manufacturing, health care, digital advertising, image recognition and gaming, to name of few,” Muma says.

"Digital technology has long played a key role in helping expand Kansans' access to quality care, and the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the need for virtual platforms," said Don King, chief executive officer for Ascension Via Christi and ministry market leader for Ascension Kansas. "That need continues to grow in the healthcare sector and across Kansas, particularly in rural areas with limited access, so the time is right."

The facility is expected to be operational in about two years.