

Wichita State University

Urban Higher Education – Investing in Kansas

Wichita State University is an urban serving university with a comprehensive research mission and a commitment to student learning. The University's principal educational, research and outreach programs align closely with the economic, social, health, and educational imperatives of Wichita, the largest urban center in the state. In partnership with the most significant aviation manufacturing and technology sector in the world, with the largest health care system in Kansas, and with the country's nineteenth largest school district, the university actively supports economic development, educational innovation (beginning in pre-K) and teacher training, social well being, and workforce development through undergraduate and graduate education, customized training, cooperative education, continuing education and the application of research.

The University's urban serving research mission is widely recognized and congruent with the economic needs of the state and the nation. Its elements directly support both the national agenda for urban serving research universities (developing human capital; strengthening communities and promoting urban health) and the strategic issues advanced by the Kansas Board of Regents last spring (K-12 alignment; participation rate; workforce development; retention and understanding learning outcomes.) These mission themes were strongly affirmed through the recent Higher Learning Commission ten-year reaccreditation process culminating in March 2007. This strong mission focus enhanced by increased investment would be used to strategically advance historically successful programs and newer initiatives having the potential enhance student performance and strengthen the economic vitality of Kansas and beyond.

Investments in the preparation, participation, persistence and learning outcomes of students.

Wichita State University serves South Central Kansas where the pool of potential students reflects a vast variation in pre-college preparation, family income, career aspirations, and family higher education history. The region includes a number of minority groups who have historically enjoyed limited access to higher education. A large proportion of WSU students must work to support their college education. Attracting and nurturing students in this complex environment requires a highly individualized and responsive recruitment, admission and retention program, which the university has historically delivered with great success in a distributed format. Enhanced investments would significantly improve and centralize this process toward achieving the following outcomes:

- *Reorient the University advising system* – The University is rethinking its student advising strategy with the goal of better matching the complexity of student goals and preparation. The success of this program will depend on the implementation of a comprehensive advisor training program and actions to increase access to advisors, particularly remotely which would be supported by additional resources.
- *Complete implementation of enrollment management model* – Additional resources would support the University's goal to implement a strategic enrollment management model that will integrate recruitment, admissions, financial aid, registration, advising, student retention and academic progress with a focus on individualized attention.
- *Increase access to higher education* – WSU is the most diverse institution in the Regent's system. Strategic outreach and targeted scholarships have been used historically increase access to higher education for under-represented groups. New programs that introduce the college experience to seventh and eighth grade students show great promise. Long-running programs such as TRIO, and Distinguished Scholars Invitational are extremely successful. Additional funds would be applied to this important effort with the goal of doubling minority and first generation student enrollment in five years.
- *Coordinate institutional assessment with the national Voluntary System of Accountability* – The recent Higher Learning Commission report strongly affirmed the university approach to the assessment of student learning, which includes both local and nationally normed measures of both student engagement and student learning

(both of which are required to understand the learning environment and how to improve it). The elements of this assessment strategy are reflected in the University's three-year performance agreement. The University will enhance this strategy going forward by participating in the Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA) system currently being developed by NASULGC and AACSB. Any new resources will be used to increase sampling in all areas to a level of high confidence and to implement outcomes-based curriculum changes.

Investment to achieve significant advancement in addressing critical workforce needs.

The University is involved in the development of human capital through close working relationships with business, industry, local government and the educational sector. In recent years the university has undertaken a number of strategic partnerships to meet this challenge, in response to more defined workforce needs and public initiatives in aviation, education, and allied health specialties. Increased strategic investments would be used to enhance the achievement of the following outcomes:

- *Support innovative, research-based approaches to technical training* – The reorganization of state technical college governance, new leadership at the Wichita Area Technical College (WATC) and the plans of Sedgwick County to establish the Center for Aviation Training have created a climate for innovative change in aviation-related technical education. WSU has joined WATC and Sedgwick County in a new effort to coordinate the development and delivery of technical education in South Central Kansas. The partnership is based on a research-to-training model that builds training curricula around leading edge research. The new Center for Aviation when completed will coordinate research and training under a partnership within the same facility.
- *Increase number of engineers* - The South Central Kansas aviation manufacturing sector is experiencing a severe shortage of engineers that is expected to persist well into the future. Wichita State University is the principle supplier of engineers in the areas in aviation, networking, and other highly specialized fields related to the aviation industry. WSU will use additional state funds to increase the number of engineering graduates through student recruitment and capacity building.
- *Increase number of nurses and other allied health professionals* – The University was early in responding in a significant way to the critical shortage of nurses by reallocating funds to increase the size of the nursing class a full year before the establishment of the state matching fund initiative. A new accredited advantage nursing program leading to the BSN degree in approximately twelve fewer months is planned. An increased investment would allow this program to be implemented much sooner. In addition, anticipated shortages in other allied health professions such as medical technology and physical therapy could be addressed with some modest investments in improved facilities.
- *Increase number teachers and pre-K specialists* – The following programs in partnership with USD 259 would be quickly expanded to produce teachers in areas of significant need through the investment of these funds: (a) the nationally recognized alternative certification programs which retrains professionals with college degrees. (b) The Urban Teacher Preparation Program that combines elementary education with language training to produce teachers who can handle the language challenges of an increasingly diverse student body. This program needs to be expanded to the secondary level to reach its full potential. (c) Pre-K development and literacy program. (d) Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) programs.
- *Incorporate work-based and internship-based learning throughout the curriculum* -- Wichita State University is a leader in work-based and cooperative learning. Last year, Cooperative Education students earned over \$5 million dollars in credit-based, faculty supervised work experiences. The goal is to provide the opportunity for work-based learning or internships to every qualified, degree-seeking student at WSU through additional strategic investments. This would make WSU the first university in the country to fully incorporate work-based learning throughout the curriculum directly enhancing the preparation of our students for employment related to their degree programs.

- *Increase the number of accountants and globally trained business graduates* – A transition in the leadership of the Barton School of Business provides an excellent opportunity to address growing concerns from the business community about the critical shortage of accountants and business graduates with global perspectives and experience.
- *Significantly increase level of specialized customized training for business and education* – There is a growing need in South Central Kansas for highly specialized customized training in support of management and education. The university currently provides some support through the activities of its Center for Management Development (CMD) and the Hugo Wall School of Urban and Public Affairs. A goal for the future is to significantly expand the capacity and mission of those units to vastly increase the University's capacity to deliver specialized training.

Investments in research in support of economic development and extramural funding.

The basic and applied research programs at WSU are focused within the urban serving mission, designed to leverage external support, and to be industry oriented. A reorganization of research administration in the past year has consolidated the research mission, optimized resources, and linked entrepreneurship, intellectual property (including patents), and technology transfer with faculty research. For example, through the efforts of the National Institute for Aviation Research for every \$1 the state invests in aviation research at Wichita State, the university generates \$11.60 in federal and industry funding. This is key to the support of an aviation industry which provides approximately \$1.6 billion in tax revenue and 36,500 jobs to the State of Kansas. A number of areas of high research activity are directly related to local, state and national commerce and economic growth.

- *Solidify the preeminence of the National Institute for Aviation Research (NIAR) in the area of composite research and development* – There is little doubt that the future of aviation lies in the development, construction, testing and manufacturing of airplanes composed largely of composite materials. Through NIAR, WSU is currently the world leader in the area of aviation composites. Seventy percent of all composite research at the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) occurs at Wichita State University. Additional state investment would build upon previous strategic investments and continue to leverage federal and industry funds.
- *Significantly enhance partnerships in the area of biocomposite research related to health* – The University and the Via Christi Health Network currently have a strong and rapidly growing partnership in the area of biocomposite research related to orthopedics. Applications for an Imminent Scholar and the Rising Star Program are pending with the Kansas Bioscience Authority who encouraged the applications. This is an area of significant growth potential that would be supported.
- *Significantly increase basic research capacity in the biosciences* – The University has begun a five year plan to increase the research (and teaching) capacity in the biological and chemical sciences both to increase basic research in those areas and to support applied research in biocomposites and other important areas. Additional funding would be used to accomplish that goal more rapidly.
- *Increase ongoing research activities at the extremes of life (early childhood, aging adulthood)* – The University's Regional Center for Aging is a consortium of over thirty researchers with interests in the process of human aging. A former Program Officer in the area of aging from NIH directs the program and is currently developing and coordinating the host of activities on our campus with the goal of leveraging federal support for aging research. The university is actively engaged in discussions with private partners for support of a university lead, community-focused comprehensive pre-K health and literacy initiative. Additional state support would be used to leverage this effort.