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Wichita State aerospace engineering student awarded prestigious NSF fellowship

By Sara Ornelas, Marketing Content Strategist



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"To me, this fellowship means hope," Wojciechowski said. "It shows me how far I have come and my potential for how far I can go. When I started my college and my research careers, I would not have imagined applying to this fellowship, let alone receiving the fellowship."

Wojciechowski, who hails from St. Louis, earned her undergraduate degree in aerospace engineering from Wichita State in spring 2020 and started graduate school in the fall. During her undergraduate years and the first year of her grad school she participated in the NASA in Kansas program. Her research specialty is structures and solid mechanics with particular interest in structural acoustics.

"My research project involves investigating metasurfaces for their acoustic properties in the hopes of using them as acoustic liners in aircraft engines," she said.

Wojciechowski was encouraged to apply for the NSF GRF by her advisor, Dr. Bhisam Sharma, assistant professor of aerospace engineering and director of the Mechanics of Dynamics Laboratory.

"Brittany is highly intelligent, industrious and inquisitive by nature," Sharma said.

Wojciechowski started working with Sharma's lab as an undergraduate researcher during her junior year and "has since grown leaps and bounds and taken ownership of her academic career," he said.

"Given her significant research and outreach accomplishments so far, it is no surprise that she has added another feather to her cap by winning the NSF Graduate Research Fellowship. Engineering requires more women like Brittany to help move our field forward in an equitable fashion, and I have no doubts that she will contribute not only to improving our society through technological advancements but also through her leadership and mentoring work," Sharma said.

During the application process, Wojciechowski was required to submit a personal statement of her background and goals.

"The application process caused me to look back at what I had accomplished," she said. "I do not talk about my achievements in casual conversation, so seeing them all written down — along with the National Science Foundation acknowledging my accomplishments with this award — gives me a confidence boost as an engineer and a researcher."

Dr. Coleen Pugh, associate vice president for research and dean of the Graduate School, said the NSF Graduate Research Fellowship program helps ensure the vitality of the human-resource base of science and engineering in the US by recognizing and supporting outstanding domestic graduate students in science, technology, engineering and mathematics disciplines who are pursuing research-based master's and doctoral degrees at US institutions.

"This award recognizes not only Brittany's academic and research accomplishments, but also her future research potential in terms of advancing her field and benefiting society," Pugh said. "This award is so prestigious that it will continue to impact her opportunities and reputation throughout the next stages of her education and career. I look forward to seeing all that Brittany discovers and accomplishes."

For the award, Wojciechowski will receive a \$34,000 per year stipend, and Wichita State's College of Engineering will receive a \$12,000 payment toward the cost of tuition and fees for each of the three years of fellowship funding.

"As a first-generation female, I also hope that this encourages other first-generation females to overcome their obstacles and achieve their full potential," Wojciechowski said.