

WSU News

August 18, 2021

NIAR helps South Kansas earn Defense Manufacturing Community designation

By Strategic Communications



Advanced Technologies Lab for Aerospace Systems (ATLAS) is part of Wichita State's National Institute for Aviation Research (NIAR).

The Department of Defense (DoD) has designated South Kansas as a Defense Manufacturing Community (DMC), making the region eligible for \$5 million through the Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation's Defense Manufacturing Community Support Program. The initiative is led by Wichita State University's National Institute for Aviation Research (NIAR).

As one of 11 U.S. Defense Manufacturing Communities, South Kansas will strengthen the national security innovation base by expanding ultra-high and high-temperature material characterizations, capabilities, process tools, sustainment planning, technical workforce, and engineering competencies to enhance the defense industrial base capabilities and accelerated weapon system prototype development.

"The designation and subsequent funding will support and grow Wichita's portfolio of DoD programs," said John Tomblin, Wichita State's senior vice president for Industry & Defense Programs and NIAR executive director. "It will provide additional resources for cutting-edge programs aimed at strengthening the military and ensuring the safety of the warfighter; and solidify Wichita's growing reputation as a primary resource hub for the DoD."

The South Kansas DMC will extend the DoD's ability to research, design, test and prototype while addressing production factors. It will specialize in high-demand weapon systems that require high-temperature components and hypersonic capabilities to enable the manufacture, delivery, and sustainment of critical new platforms to U.S. service members and allies.

The South Kansas DMC will collaborate extensively with the DoD and a diverse consortium of partners including large original equipment manufacturers and tier-one suppliers; small and medium-sized globally connected companies; defense technology transfer entities; a local workforce investment board; regional economic developers; a manufacturing extension partnership; and two U.S. manufacturing institutes: Advanced Robotics for Manufacturing (ARM) and America Makes.

A Technical Advisory Panel will guide the initiative. It will include five members of the Kansas Aviation Research and Technology Growth Initiative (KART), a state-funded research program established in 2003. Similar to the KART program, the advisory panel will identify high-priority research programs and select those that fit within the available budget – giving priority to programs that focus on increasing national security.

The center's long-term goal is to establish unique programs to build warfighting inventory utilizing high-temperature materials and production and sustainment-enabling technologies.

The Defense Manufacturing Community Support Program supports long-term community investments that strengthen national security innovation and expand the capabilities of the defense manufacturing industrial ecosystem.

Additional Defense Manufacturing Community Support Program awardees include the Commonwealth of Virginia, North Carolina State University, Texas A&M and the University of Tennessee.