

WSU News

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WSU-NIAR WERX receives 777 aircraft for Kansas Modification Center passenger-to-freighter conversion

By Strategic Communications



A Boeing 777-300ER passenger aircraft is parked in Wichita State University's National Institute for Aviation Research facilities. As part of its rapidly growing Maintenance Repair and Overhaul program, WSU-NIAR WERX, in conjunction with Kansas Modification Center, will convert the passenger aircraft into a freighter that will be transferred to an external client to meet the growing needs of the e-commerce and express cargo market.

WERX at Wichita State University's National Institute for Aviation Research (NIAR) has received its first Boeing 777-300ER passenger aircraft.

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The Kansas Modification Center, led by President and CEO Jim Gibbs, is a newly formed business aimed at meeting the industry's growing need for MRO and conversion programs. It will own the aircraft Supplemental Type Certificate and license the conversions.

The 777 conversion program will provide unique applied learning opportunities for WSU engineering and WSU Tech airframe and powerplant mechanics students.

"This is a rare opportunity for students to gain experience working on an industry program alongside and under the guidance of NIAR's seasoned team of experts," said Dave Jones, director of NIAR WERX. "Our engineers have the unique chance to pass their combined 7,500 years of experience in design, production and testing on to the next generation of aviation professionals."

"This is an exceptional chance for the students to gain practical, real-world experience, working under the mentorship of experienced engineers and licensed mechanics," said Sheree Utash, WSU Tech president.

NIAR WERX is based out of modification facilities adjacent to McConnell Air Force Base. The WERX team implements innovative and efficient methods for the rapid development of engineering, modification, testing and certification of new aircraft and modifications/overhaul.

"This collaboration reflects the vision set forth in the Kansas Framework for Growth and will create new opportunities for commercial aviation while demonstrating the world-class sophistication of our state's aviation experts," said Kansas Gov. Laura Kelly.

"This agreement exemplifies the innovative spirit of Wichita and the reason they continue to be the 'Air Capital of the World,'" said U.S. Senator Jerry Moran. "This is just the start for NIAR WERX, and I look forward to seeing all they will accomplish and the positive footprint it will leave on Wichita."

[NIAR WERX](#) performs structure and subsystems design; stress, fatigue and damage tolerance; avionics, electrical and mechanical systems; flight sciences, external loads and structural dynamics; powerplant and airworthiness certification with a team of more than 300 experienced engineers and technicians.