

WSU News

May 25, 2022

NIAR WERX announces MRO program expansion with Erickson Precision Ventures

By Strategic Communications



Wichita State University's NIAR WERX has recently signed an agreement to expand its program to convert passenger aircraft into cargo planes. The above Airbus 321 is an example of the work that will be done through NIAR's Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul program.

The WERX program at Wichita State University's National Institute for Aviation Research (NIAR) and Erickson Precision Ventures have reached an agreement to work cooperatively on modification, maintenance and engineering for various Boeing and Airbus aircraft.

NIAR will soon complete conversions and maintenance – which began last year – for Erickson's subsidiary company, Erickson Aero Tanker.

In the third quarter of 2022, NIAR WERX will begin performance of passenger-to-freighter (P2F) conversions for Erickson, adding two new aircraft to its conversion portfolio with the expectation of performing 12-24 per year for Precision Aircraft Solutions (Precision) at NIAR WERX.

"The unprecedented demand for the Airbus and Boeing products is a testament to the investment and teamwork needed to create industry leading products for our community and our customers, said Precision President Gary Warner. "Precision works with facilities around the globe to satisfy this demand, and NIAR WERX represents a truly unique addition to the team. Through their applied research and technology, NIAR WERX has the people and facilities needed for the required production levels, a purpose-driven team and the state level support needed to realize their overall vision."

"I'm extremely proud of the team of engineers, technicians and students we have assembled here in Wichita," said NIAR WERX executive director David Jones. "They have embraced and risen to the challenge of completing some of the most complex conversion programs. As WERX continues to build the premier air vehicle new development and modification center in Kansas, we will be making further announcements of large growth in Wichita, Salina and Topeka."



WSU-NIAR and Precision teams. Top (left to right): Stacia Boden, WSU general counsel; Steven Thomas, president, Erickson Group; Allison Bonitati, NIAR WERX program director; Louis Valdes, Valdes & Associates; Tamra Dereiko, Precision; Jillian Thomas, Precision; Jessica Skladzien, WSU general counsel. Bottom (left to right): John Tomblin, WSU senior vice president for Industry & Defense Programs/NIAR executive director; Jack Erickson; Dave Jones, NIAR WERX executive director; Gary Warner, president, Precision Aircraft Solutions

Senator Jerry Moran, a strong supporter of Kansas aviation, said, "Kansas has the resources to become the MRO Capital, and it is quickly becoming a reality. The strong partnerships that NIAR WERX is forming with Precision will provide high-paying skilled jobs for Kansans while simultaneously supporting aviation industry growth across the country."

"Adding these aircraft to the NIAR WERX portfolio highlights the Wichita region's importance to the aerospace industry," said Kansas Governor Laura Kelly. "This expansion creates additional career opportunities for Kansans while emphasizing to other businesses that Kansas is a place of growth and possibility."

Based on this new partnership and the recently announced expansion of Kansas Modification Center's 777-300ERCF P2F conversion program, NIAR WERX anticipates the creation of nearly 1,500 jobs over the next five years.