

WSU News

October 20, 2022

FirePoint Future Innovators internship showcases under-represented STEM talent

By WSU Strategic Communications



FirePoint's new cohort of Future Innovators interns.

The FirePoint Innovations Center at Wichita State University wrapped up the second year of its Future Innovators Program, an engineering internship opportunity that provides some of America's brightest engineers from historically under-represented communities the opportunity to work on cutting-edge projects and programs that directly support the U.S. Army Aviation and Missile Center (AvMC) and the Department of Defense (DoD).

The program is a partnership between FirePoint, AvMC, Tuskegee University and Prairie View A&M University, connecting students from historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) to internship opportunities with WSU's National Institute for Aviation Research (NIAR), Spirit AeroSystems and Textron Aviation in the Wichita Area.

"Textron Aviation was fortunate to welcome four FirePoint interns this year in our defense engineering organization," said Robert Collins, Textron Aviation director of defense engineering. "The caliber of work and dedication that the interns showed was truly an honor to witness, and we could see the pride they had in working with our teams. This program is a true benefit to all involved, and I am excited to continue our relationship with FirePoint in the future."

In this year's program, 12 students spent 10 weeks working directly for organizations in the local aviation ecosystem, while gaining insight into the advanced materials testing and design and development of military aviation and missile assets. Throughout the summer, the future innovators met bi-weekly with mentors at AvMC to discuss their career goals and learn about potential opportunities within the DoD. The students also met with FirePoint mentors to discuss business development, networking and resume building.



Future Innovators is part of FirePoint's mission to support Army innovators in developing critical new technology capabilities, at the speed of Silicon Valley, to solve their most pressing problems.

"One of our top initiatives involves cultivating young STEM talent to support the Army's future needs," said Steve Cyrus, executive director of FirePoint. "Through workforce development programs like Future Innovators, we're able to engage students in hands-on collaborative work that not only gives them valuable career-building experience, but also raises awareness of Army-related job opportunities."

Aiming to give minority students opportunities to explore engineering careers, FirePoint is hoping to introduce greater equality, diversity and inclusion into STEM fields.

After doubling the participation in Future Innovators in their second year, FirePoint plans to expand the program to include even more students and industry partners in the coming years.