

WSU News

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Wichita State earns APLU designation as an Innovation & Economic Prosperity institution

By Strategic Communications



Wichita State University was recently designated as an Innovation and Economic Prosperity University by the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities. The national designation acknowledges public research universities working with public and private sector partners in their states and regions to support economic development.

In recognition of its strong commitment to economic engagement, the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) has designated Wichita State University as an Innovation & Economic Prosperity (IEP) University. The national designation acknowledges public research universities working with public and private sector partners in their states and regions to support economic development through a variety of activities, including innovation and entrepreneurship, technology transfer, talent and workforce development, and community development.

“On behalf of Shocker Nation, we are honored that the APLU has confirmed Wichita State as a driver for innovation and economic development in Kansas,” said Dr. Rick Muma, president of Wichita State. “Since 2013, our mission is to be an essential educational, cultural and economic driver for Kansas and the greater public good, as well as many of our research initiatives and programs directly support the needs of the people and businesses in our state. This designation recognizes those efforts and affirms what we’ve known all along as Kansas’ premier urban public research university.”

Wichita State is now one of only 80 higher education institutions designated as an IEP university. Institutions that have received the IEP designation have reported significant advancement of their efforts due to the stakeholder engagement and self-study efforts undertaken in conjunction with the program. “Economic development is a major pillar of universities’ work,” said APLU President Mark Becker. “From talent development to pathbreaking research to entrepreneurship and beyond, institutions have a central role to play in economic development. We’re pleased to recognize Wichita State for its commitment to engaging its community around these issues to advance regional economic development.”

Wichita State received the designation after an independent panel reviewed the school’s application, which included an internal review and analysis of its economic engagement activities that were conducted with outside stakeholder input. APLU’s Commission on Economic and Community Engagement, which manages the designation process, is a national leader in efforts to help public research universities plan, assess, and communicate their work in regional, national, and global economic development and community engagement. The CECE [Economic Engagement Framework](#) includes tools for university self-assessment, metrics determination, and economic impact analysis.

“APLU’s CECE Economic Engagement Framework is in perfect alignment with WSU’s strategic plan, the Kansas Board of Regents’ Building a Future plan, and the Kansas Department of Commerce’s Framework for Growth,” said Tonya Witherspoon, associate vice president for industry, engagement and applied learning at Wichita State. “This recognition from APLU gives WSU students, faculty, staff and industry partners national recognition that WSU is an economic driver providing prosperity for our region.”

As part of the self-study conducted with internal and external stakeholders that was central to the designation application process, the university identified areas of institutional strength in economic engagement and described its commitment in these areas.

In addition to the infusion of applied learning and innovation in every program and department at the university, Wichita State strengths include the [College of Innovation and Design](#); [National Center for Research and Digital Transformation](#); the [Flight Test Research Center and Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul \(MRO\) facility](#); and the [Office of Tech Transfer and Commercialization](#); the [Innovation Campus](#); and the [Molecular Diagnostics Lab](#).

Wichita State also identified areas for growth and improvement for the university's economic engagement enterprise. Some of the areas for improvement for WSU included advancing research partnerships; communicating the impact of partnerships with the campus and community; and bridging innovation, community and business partners with the campus community.

Applications for the designation are evaluated by a panel of reviewers representing other universities and regional and national partners. Scoring was based on a range of criteria emphasizing universities' development of their economic engagement enterprise, their planning efforts around economic engagement, strategic communications around these efforts, and participation in encouraging economic engagement among peer institutions.