



David Nevarez-Saenz, an aerospace engineering senior and first-generation student, has worked in Wichita State's NASA Jump Start Program (JSP) for the past two years. In the future, his team hopes to engage USD 259 high school students in engineering programs at WSU by having them visit the lab to expose them to the programs available at WSU.

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WSU NASA program launches first-generation student's future

By Abigail Klein, public relations advisor

Wichita State has a storied history of working with NASA to provide research opportunities to its students. David Nevarez-Saenz, an aerospace engineering senior

and first-generation student, has been working with [WSU's NASA Jump Start Program \(JSP\)](#) for the past two years.

David learned about the program while he was freshman and working in WSU's [First Year Research Experience \(FYRE\) program](#) in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) from Dr. Bisham Sharma, assistant professor in WSU's Department of Aerospace Engineering.

The JSP supports select students to work on NASA or NASA-relevant projects. Funding comes from NASA. Most of the opportunities come from WSU's Aerospace Engineering Department.

"The faculty are very open to mentoring freshman students about how to start the processes for research and sharing their experiences to help students with zero research experience," Nevarez-Saenz said.

Jumping right into his role with the program, Nevarez-Saenz began his project in summer 2021. He worked with Wichita State's College of Fine Arts to 3D print ceramic cones and make observations about acoustics and thermal characteristics.

"3D printing ceramics is more complex than plastics. You have to have the right consistencies," Nevarez-Saenz said. "I chose ceramics because of their ability to capture thermal acoustics."

Nevarez-Saenz says the research will help him in the future when he pursues a graduate degree in engineering.

"I want to show them what it is out there and how they can improve their lives, whether they are first-generation or not." — Nevarez-Saenz said.

He says the JSP program is a great opportunity for students pursuing this route, as the exposure to WSU instructors and graduate students help undergraduates gain advanced experience of the research, while also helping them narrow down the type of research that will receive funding when they are in grad school.

"Here at WSU, there has been a push to get more research initiatives," Nevarez-Saenz said. "WSU really wants its students to get familiar with the processes and the research opportunities available on campus."

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Aerospace Engineering Department

The aerospace engineering department at Wichita State is the seventh oldest in the nation. Located in the Air Capital of the World, we have long benefitted from and contributed to Wichita's rich aviation history, home to such names as Airbus, Bombardier-Learjet, Textron/Cessna/Beechcraft, and Spirit AeroSystems.

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