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WSU Ideas Lab will help Wichita State Become an Innovation University

Additional information: Wichita State University Foundation. WSU Ideas Lab will help Wichita State become an Innovation University. The new facility in Henrion Hall will complement and enhance WSU Makerspace. e-Horizon July, 2015.

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The new facility in Henrion Hall will complement and enhance WSU's Makerspace



Faculty and students from WSU's sculpture program work on a large project in Henrion Hall, where the new WSU Ideas Lab will be housed.



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Horizon Archive

Current Issue

May e-Horizon 2015

April e-Horizon 2015

February e-Horizon 2015

January Horizon 2015

November e-Horizon 2014

Bardo unveiled plans to create an [Innovation University at WSU](#), he made it clear that artists must be part of the project for it to succeed.

The WSU Ideas Lab at Wichita State will be one of the key spaces where that creative activity will take place. Coordinated through the College of Fine Arts and located in Henrion Hall — now home to studios for sculpture, ceramics and painting — the WSU Ideas Lab will bring together artists, engineers, business majors and others for the kinds of collisions that Bardo hopes will lead to technological innovation.

“It’s a fine arts version of a Makerspace,” says [Rodney Miller](#), dean of the College of Fine Arts. “The people who are most excited about the development of a WSU Ideas Lab are the engineers. It enhances and expands upon the very thing they’re trying to do with the Makerspace.”

WSU’s Makerspace will be located in the Experiential Engineering Building, the first facility to be built on the Innovation Campus. With groundbreaking occurring this summer, it is expected to open in fall 2016.

The WSU Foundation is working with the College of Fine Arts to raise funds for the WSU Ideas Lab, considered one of the university’s top priorities. A goal of \$3.2 million in private donations has been set.

“In order for Wichita State to help our students be as creative as they can be, we need facilities and equipment that are broader and more diverse than what the Makerspace alone will offer,” says Elizabeth King, president and CEO of the WSU Foundation. “The WSU Ideas Lab will provide ideal opportunities for the collisions and collaborations that are so necessary for the germination of ideas.”

One example of work that is likely to occur in the WSU Ideas Lab is using an advanced set of kilns that the College of Fine Arts plans to procure to help engineers design innovations in composite materials, an area of research for which Wichita State already is well known, Miller said.

October Horizon 2014
September e-Horizon
2014
Summer Horizon 2014
May e-Horizon 2014
April e-Horizon 2014
February e-Horizon
2014
Winter Horizon 2014
Fall e-Horizon 2013
Fall Horizon 2013
Back Issues

The WSU Ideas Lab also is essential to Wichita State's plans to offer a new master's degree in innovation design, which is in the final stages of approval by the Kansas Board of Regents, he said. The degree is aimed at students with broad interests in several design fields or who have a specific goal in mind to create "a patent, a process, a product or a portfolio," Miller said.

Renovation of Henrion Hall is expected to begin in 2016. The WSU Ideas Lab will have far broader application than just the fine arts, Miller said.

"While this will be housed in a Fine Arts facility and while the College of Fine Arts will be involved in the fundraising, it should not be thought of as a Fine Arts project or facility," he said. "If it is only that, we will have failed."

At the same time, he said, the WSU Ideas Lab will help move the College of Fine Arts into the 21st century.

"Our curriculum and the way we teach students are still very much in the 20th century," Miller said. "This lab will provide opportunities for our students and especially for our faculty to engage themselves and their art in a 21st century paradigm."

➔ **If you'd like to learn more about supporting the WSU Ideas Lab**, please contact Marya McCrae, WSU Foundation director of development for the College of Fine Arts, at 319-978-3945 or marya.mccrae@wichita.edu.

BACK TO TOP