

Forward Together: President's June 2021 Message



Presidential priorities in action

In the past month, I've written and spoken quite a lot about my three presidential priorities: accelerating applied learning opportunities for our students, growing research and innovation at Wichita State, and focusing on freedom of expression.

But these aren't just words to use on PowerPoint presentations and during speeches. At Wichita State, we're living these priorities every day. Below are a few examples of how we're working toward a better Shocker Nation.

Applied Learning: More than 5,000 Wichita State students last year gained real-world experiences through internships, research or co-ops, allowing them to work side-by-side with professionals in their chosen industry, build professional networks and resumes, and earn a paycheck.



Dr. Richard Muma, president

- The [United Way recently announced](#) that it has been granted a Youth Service of America grant. The \$15,000 grant was awarded based on an application submitted by Jadie Chauncey, who is a senior in social work at Wichita State. Jadie, a Junction City native, works as a community impact intern at United Way.

“This experience has helped me gain valuable life skills, as well as work skills, that I will use throughout my life,” Jadie said. “Aside from career preparedness, this experience has helped me learn about, and grow more connected to Wichita.”

Additionally, Wichita State students Ngoc Vuong and Jordy Mosqueda contributed to the key parts of the application.

- Students in Dr. Lisa Parcell’s Integrated Marketing Communication Campaigns class worked with Alce Su Voz (Spanish for “Raise Your Voice”), Riverfest, and the Kansas Nonprofit Chamber of Commerce to [develop full marketing and communication campaigns](#).

“This work is preparing me for my career because it’s real-world experience,” said David Garcia senior in integrated marketing communication who’s focusing on the Alce Su Voz account. “This organization is going to use the materials that we are making for them.”

For Tammie Huynh, Kansas Nonprofit Chamber campaign account manager, the applied-learning experience helped her discover her career goals.

“This campaign gives me a look at what account managing is like and made me realize I would enjoy this position in the future,” Huynh said.

- In March, Wichita State’s [NIAR received delivery of two Boeing 737](#) aircraft for modification. The aircraft are part of a yearlong project with Virginia-based Dynamic Aviation to modify three 737 aircraft for a special-mission program. The team will consist of about 90 Wichita State students and faculty.

Research: Wichita State is well on its way to establishing itself as a premier, urban-serving research university. In addition to making WSU the innovation powerhouse that it is, research brings in valuable partnerships to our community, creates jobs for Wichitans and applied learning opportunities for our students, and increases the overall economic prosperity for Kansas.

- [NASA recently awarded Dr. Nick Solomey](#), professor of physics, \$2 million for his work on developing a neutrino detector to study the sun.

As a high-energy particle physicist, Solomey has worked at CERN particle accelerator in Switzerland and Fermilab accelerator laboratory in Illinois.

“Now my hope is to bring ideas and techniques to NASA space exploration mission as a tool to look into the sun, but maybe also a new way to search for dark matter and even galactic core neutrinos,” Solomey said.

- Brittany Wojciechowski, a Wichita State University Ph.D. graduate student in aerospace engineering, has been [awarded the prestigious National Science Foundation's Graduate Research Fellowship](#), which is worth more than \$120,000.

“To me, this fellowship means hope,” Wojciechowski said. “It shows me how far I have come and my potential for how far I can go. When I started my college and my research careers, I would not have imagined applying to this fellowship, let alone receiving the fellowship.”

Wojciechowski's research specialty is structures and solid mechanics with particular interest in structural acoustics.

- Speaking of the NSF, Dr. Rémi Chou has been awarded a National Science Foundation CAREER Award, the most prestigious award granted by the NSF to early career researchers worth more than \$500,000.

Chou, an assistant professor in the Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, proposes to build a comprehensive framework to enable the fundamental understanding and design of privacy-preserving wireless communication protocols, relying on new coding techniques from information theory, cryptography and deep machine learning.

Freedom of Expression: This is a cornerstone to academic institutions. Without difficult conversations and rigorous debate, we can't grow as individuals or as an institution.

- The Craig Barton Lecture series: Under the office of the president, this series will be a prestigious annual event with the intended purpose to expose students to differing points of view and encourage critical thinking and conversation.
- In April, the W. Frank Barton School of Business hosted [freedom-of-innovation expert Adam Thierer](#), a senior research fellow at the Mercatus Center at George Mason University. Thierer specializes in innovation, entrepreneurialism, Internet and free-speech issues, with a particular focus on the public policy concerns surrounding emerging technologies.

Thierer makes the case that we should accept — and often even embrace — a certain amount of disruptive entrepreneurship that fosters innovation, drives economic growth, and makes government accountable to the governed

We also hosted “Speaking Freely on Freedom of Expression,” a virtual panel discussion the vital role that public universities play as promoter and protector of free expression. The discussion included Tyson Langhofer, a 1996 graduate of Wichita State; Christine Hughes, former vice president and general counsel of Emerson College; and Neal Allen, chair of Wichita State's department of political science, joined Pelton as panelists. To view the discussion, visit Wichita State's YouTube channel.

These are just a few samples of what we at Wichita State are doing every day to be one of the nation's most innovative urban public research universities, known for providing impactful student experiences and driving prosperity for the people and communities we serve.

Go Shockers.

Sincerely,

Dr. Rick Muma

President of Wichita State University