Like most states, Kansas is facing substantial budget challenges. If current revenue trends continue, the state budget is forecast to be out of balance by a whopping billion dollars by 2010. Most state agencies, including universities, have reduced their budgets in this fiscal year. Clearly, all of us who receive state funding are very actively planning for budget reductions.

Our goal at Wichita State is to hold true to our commitment to be accountable to the students, faculty, alumni and community that we serve, a precept central to President Beggs’ vision of the university. So, our planning focuses on maintaining core values, essential programs, and, most importantly, the highest quality in our teaching, research and outreach activities.

Fortunately, we have a superb and dedicated faculty who understand what quality means and how to deliver it. Because of this great reservoir of commitment and creativity, we expect to continue to nurture innovation even in these uncertain economic times.

Over the past year, faculty and staff at the university have invested an enormous amount of their creative energy in exhaustive analyses of key programs to move the university forward. For example:

- The Globalization Task Force, which included members of the community, examined how we should operate in the global, technology-based economy.
- The Michael Tilford Working Group, which involves faculty and staff from all of the university divisions, continues to examine how we can nurture and employ the great diversity of the Wichita area.
- A task force of faculty and staff analyzed the national movement in e-learning and developed a set of recommendations and operating practices to guide our work in that area.
- A small group of professionals appointed by Dr. Ron Kopita and me have worked for over a year (and continue to work) to understand our enrollment and financial aid dynamics with the goal of increasing access to our educational opportunities.

For the latest information and communication from the Provost, check out:
www.wichita.edu/provost
LEARNET AWARDS NIAR LARGEST EVER WSU RESEARCH CONTRACT

The National Institute for Aviation Research at Wichita State has been awarded the largest contract in university history. NIAR will be involved in FAA certification of the planned Learjet 85 mid-sized business jet.

The contract is expected to total between $10 million and $20 million, said John Tomblin, NIAR executive director. David Coleal, Bombardier Learjet’s vice president and general manager, said: “This will be the largest, fastest Learjet ever built. We’re very fortunate to have one of the nation’s leading composite centers here at Wichita State to work with us on this innovative project.”

“Learjet has long been a supporter of technology advancements within NIAR,” said Ralph Acs, vice president, Learjet 85. “This new partnership will strengthen this relationship and supports the plan to make the Learjet 85 a technologically advanced aircraft.”

Provost Gary L. Miller said, “This is outstanding recognition of the Wichita State model of developing research and testing capabilities directly in response to current and anticipated industry and government needs.”

Learjet has been a core member of NIAR’s Industry Advisory Council since its inception in 2002. The council, made up of the vice presidents of engineering at Learjet, Boeing IDS, Cessna, Hawker Beechcraft, and Spirit AeroSystems, provides input and feedback on the research focus and laboratory capabilities at NIAR.