PRESS RELEASE

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Wichita State is 2nd in nation in aeronautical R&D expenditures

Wichita State University has risen to second among the nation’s universities in aeronautical research and development expenditures, according to the latest information from the National Science Foundation’s (NSF) National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics.

In fiscal year 2009, Wichita State had $50 million in aeronautical R&D expenditures, compared to $32.9 million in 2008. Wichita State was fourth in 2008 and third in 2007. This $17 million increase in expenditures puts Wichita State just over $1 million behind the top institution, Utah State University, which reported $51.6 million and operates the Space Dynamics Laboratory.

Wichita State’s numbers reflect the efforts of the National Institute for Aviation Research’s (NIAR) mission to support the local aviation industry by providing research, development, testing and certification.

“I am pleased for the staff at NIAR and everyone who works with us,” said Don Beggs, WSU president. “We work hard to move the industry forward and our No. 2 ranking is indicative of our continued leadership in aviation.”

“It demonstrates that the industry recognizes that research and development play a key role in the economic recovery phase,” said John Tomblin, NIAR executive director. “Because of this and other innovative new partnerships, the institute has experienced unprecedented growth.”

NIAR funding totaled $39.4 million in 2009, which accounted for 79 percent of the university’s aeronautical R&D expenditures. NIAR funding for 2009 was made up of the following sources:

• Federal contracts, 49 percent
• Industry contracts, 32 percent
• NIAR/Industry/State research program, 13 percent
• Wichita State University, 3 percent
• Kansas Technology Enterprise Corp., 2 percent

Examples of NIAR’s federal contracts include grants from the Federal Aviation Administration for composites research and the Department of Defense for aging aircraft research, specifically life extension of the KC-135 tanker fleet.
“This investment will help to create good high-paying jobs right here in Kansas,” said Gov. Sam Brownback. “With this strong commitment by Wichita State and our other Regents institutions, Kansas will compete and win in the global marketplace.”

Tomblin has spent nearly 15 years developing relationships with these and other agencies to prove NIAR’s expertise and capability in many areas of aeronautical R&D.

“The amount of R&D funding NIAR receives from federal agencies and aircraft manufacturers is a direct reflection of the value the organizations place in R&D and the quality of the research results they receive,” Tomblin said. “NIAR will continue to garner relationships with these and other organizations with the goal of increasing our footprint on aviation R&D.”

Wichita State’s large amount of industry funding was recently noted in an article in The Chronicle of Higher Education, which stated that few universities exceed 5 percent in industry funding. The article predicts that the relationship Wichita State has developed with the aviation industry could “pave the way” for other universities to increase industry funding of research.

Media note:
The Johns Hopkins University was listed as the top spender in the original NSF table. However, according to Ronda Britt, survey manager for the NSF’s National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics, Johns Hopkins “reported zero dollars in aeronautical/astronautical engineering for FY 2009.” Expenditures listed in this category belong to the Advanced Physics Laboratory, a center for engineering, research and development responsible for 600 programs involving homeland security and space science. The lab is primarily funded by federal government agencies.

About NIAR
The National Institute for Aviation Research (NIAR) at Wichita State University supports the aviation industry by providing research, development, testing and certification services to manufacturers, government agencies and education entities. NIAR laboratories include: Advanced Coatings, Advanced Joining & Processing, Aging Aircraft, CAD/CAM, Composites & Advanced Materials, Computational Mechanics, Crash Dynamics, Environmental Test, Full-Scale Structural Test, Mechanical Test, Metrology, Nondestructive Test, Research Machine Shop, Virtual Reality and the Walter H. Beech Wind Tunnel. NIAR operates on a nonprofit budget that has steadily increased to more than $45 million in fiscal year 2010. NIAR is the largest university aviation R&D institution in the U.S. With its location in Wichita, Kan., the “Air Capital of the World,” NIAR is able to integrate business, government and university entities in cooperative efforts to advance aviation technology. NIAR operates more than 250,000 square feet of laboratory and office space and employs 350. Clients include Boeing, Bombardier Learjet, Cessna, Hawker Beechcraft and Spirit AeroSystems.

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