TECT Aerospace pledges $100,000 to support STEM-mentoring initiative in Wichita

TECT Aerospace has committed to providing $100,000 during the next five years to the Wichita State University Foundation to help develop a community-wide program for mentoring K-12 students in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM), the WSU Foundation announced today.

The gift was made with the assistance of The Glass Foundation, which provides philanthropic support on behalf of the TECT family of businesses owned by Kenneth E. Glass and family.

The financial support is seen as crucial to efforts by WSU’s College of Engineering and its partners to be named a winning city in the US2020 Initiative, which seeks to bolster STEM mentorship for underrepresented students nationwide.

Wichita is one of 13 finalists in the competition, which will award a total of $1 million in resources to five winning cities to be announced in mid March. Finalists improve their chances by demonstrating financial support from community and industry partners.

“TECT Aerospace and The Glass Foundation are pleased to support Wichita State’s effort to obtain a STEM mentoring grant for Wichita,” said Pete Knapper, president of TECT Aerospace.

“We see this as an investment in our future. Engineering professionals are key to the success of our business, and we want to encourage the development of skills that we will need to staff the workforce of the future.”

With six facilities in the United States, TECT Aerospace provides custom manufacturing services of components and assemblies for a variety of companies. It is a business unit of TECT, a family of privately held aerospace companies.

TECT Aerospace has established a strong relationship with WSU’s Office of Cooperative Education, which helps WSU students get work experience in their chosen fields of study. The company has provided internships and co-op experiences to several Wichita State students.

The gift from TECT Aerospace will be used to help the WSU College of Engineering create a citywide STEM mentoring program aimed at stimulating interest among girls, low-income youth and
More students of color in STEM education and careers. The program will recruit professionals in STEM-related fields in the Wichita area to volunteer to engage in mentoring relationships and activities with K-12 students.

The WSU-led coalition for the US2020 competition includes the city of Wichita, school districts, industry and business concerns, volunteer groups and youth-serving organizations. The coalition intends to move forward with a local STEM-mentoring program even if it is not selected for the US2020 Initiative.

“We have to continue to grow our own talent and make students aware of exciting STEM careers that impact our community and the world,” said Larry Whitman, associate dean of the WSU College of Engineering who is leading the STEM-mentoring effort for Wichita State. “This commitment from TECT Aerospace demonstrates the kind of leadership that will keep Wichita as the Air Capitol of the World.”

Growth in STEM-related jobs during the next 10 years is expected to exceed the growth of non-STEM jobs, and the United States is producing too few STEM professionals to fill the demand. That could result in Wichita, as well as the United States, losing its competitive edge in areas that are vital to economic growth.

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Media note: A photograph of TECT Aerospace representatives and Wichita State officials can be found at www.wichita.edu/foundationphotos

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