April 2017

Campus Focus: The Center of It All

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Recommended Citation
Cobb, Julee (2017) "Campus Focus: The Center of It All," Seek. Vol. 7: Iss. 1.

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Center for the Advancement of Entrepreneurship helps turn ideas into business

By Tiffany Roney

New businesses are popping up across Kansas with the help of Kansas State University’s Center for the Advancement of Entrepreneurship. The center, housed in the College of Business Administration, provides entrepreneurship education and opportunities to prospective entrepreneurs across campus and the state. Annually, it provides:

- More than 800 hours of research support for businesses started by Kansans.
- 240 hours of mentoring by entrepreneurial alumni for students.
- Thousands of dollars in cash and in-kind prizes for Kansas entrepreneurs.
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Since 2008, the center has involved more than 2,200 students in K-State Launch, an annual program that has awarded $180,000 to help start 48 new companies, most of which have started in Kansas.

The center’s successes translate into real benefits for rural Kansas, where communities need new people, ideas and income to flourish, according to the director Chad Jackson. “It’s all about leveraging K-State capital — intellectual, financial and relational — to benefit Kansas’ economy and citizens.” Jackson said. “It’s all about leveraging K-State capital — intellectual, financial and relational — to benefit Kansas’ economy and citizens.” Jackson said. “It’s all about leveraging K-State capital — intellectual, financial and relational — to benefit Kansas’ economy and citizens.”

The Kansas Entrepreneurship Challenge is for future entrepreneurs from Kansas high schools and Kansas Board of Regents institutions. Their business ideas are evaluated by a panel of judges. In 2016, more than $10,000 in cash prizes was awarded to six winning teams.

Launch a Business accepts the top applicants for a five-week intensive program in which entrepreneurs engage with students, faculty and alumni to refine and improve their ideas. Participants present their pitches at a public launch party at the end of the program. In 2015, 14 high-potential startups in Kansas competed for thousands of dollars in cash prizes.

Jackson said the center hosts these events because it takes K-State’s land-grant mission seriously.

“While we can’t be masters of all, we can cultivate an environment, through a network of experts, that produces solutions to a broad array of complex challenges facing the UAS industry,” Meyer said.

The Center of It All

By Julee Cobb

In the emerging industry of unmanned aircraft systems, or UAS, Madie Meyer is determined to make the Kansas State University Polytechnic Campus a go-to hub for the technology’s advancement.

When the UAS program was established in 2007 on the Polytechnic Campus in Salina, Meyer was studying mechanical engineering at Wichita State University. But living and learning in a city dubbed the “Air Capital of the World” made aerospace impossible to avoid, and it was aviation-centered experiences that brought Meyer to where she is today as research program manager of the Applied Aviation Research Center at Kansas State Polytechnic.

Meyer worked part time at Spirit AeroSystems while earning her bachelor’s degree. The Wichita-based aerospace manufacturer chose her to compete in an international aeronautical design challenge. Meyer sought advice for the contest from an expert at the National Institute of Aviation Research and was offered a job on the spot. She worked on translational research at the institute, merging aerospace technologies with biomedical engineering. At one point, her assistance was needed on a collaboration between the facility and Kansas State Polytechnic’s UAS program. Last time a year, Meyer was a full-time Wildcat.

Meyer’s responsibilities are many, but creating a hub for Kansas State Polytechnic’s UAS research program to be known for pre-eminent problem solving,” Meyer said. “Commercial applications are still in the early stages, and the regulatory pathway is murky. Applications of this technology are yet to be discovered and tested. If we can bring together the skills and experiences of our staff with the bright minds of various departments in Manhattan and industry stakeholders, this program can be the center of it all.”

Meyer’s plan is working. The UAS research program has been awarded four grants from the Federal Aviation Administration in the last two years. Industry collaboration also is thriving.

The program teamed up with Precision Hawk, a drone data and safety company headquartered in Raleigh, North Carolina, to calculate an achievable level of safety for drone pilot response time and choice of action when confronted by a manned intruder. The program also is working with Westar Energy to demonstrate how unmanned aircraft can propel the electric utility industry forward through inspection and maintenance methodologies.

Meyer says the UAS research program is typically involved in multiple large projects at any given time, while balancing numerous small ones, such as collaborating with the entomology department on the Manhattan campus to provide data collection over fields throughout the growing season. This wide variety of projects is all according to plan.

“While we can’t be masters of all, we can cultivate an environment, through a network of experts, that produces solutions to a broad array of complex challenges facing the UAS industry.” Meyer said. 2

2 I want Kansas State Polytechnic’s UAS research program...