State gains first aerospace and technology campus with rebranding of K-State's Salina campus

With a focus on national expansion, meeting the demands of the aerospace industry and a recognition of the niche mission of the campus which is critical to the community, state and nation, Kansas State University's Polytechnic Campus is rebranding to be Kansas State University Salina Aerospace and Technology Campus.

"This change establishes the first aerospace and technology campus in Kansas and shows our Salina campus is ready to take on the accelerating needs of the aerospace and advanced manufacturing industries," said Richard Myers, K-State president. "The Aerospace and Technology Campus will be a national leader in advanced aviation and aerospace training, education and engineering through research, innovation and instruction."

Since joining the Kansas State University system in 1991, the campus has housed the university's aviation and engineering technology programs. These are niche programs, separate from any programs offered on the other K-State campuses. The historical lineage of the campus — a two-year technical institution that merged with a public university — uniquely positions it to serve all career-entry points into the aerospace and advanced manufacturing industries.

Alysia Starkey, CEO and dean of the campus, says the new name better represents what the campus offers for prospective students, donors and community and industry partners, and is a better representation of the education received by alumni.

"We are very excited to influence the future of aerospace and technology," Starkey said. "We already offer world-renowned programs in the operational segment of aviation and look forward to expanding our offerings. Equally exciting is that the program expansions required to achieve this vision support the same business, engineering and technology workforce needs of the recent expansions in the advanced manufacturing sector in central Kansas."

Starkey said that the campus's focus on a hands-on and real-world approach to preparing students to be career-ready will remain the same.

"Our commitment to student success, personalized education and world-ready learning experiences is embedded in our institutional DNA," Starkey said.

K-State named No. 1 college in Kansas

Kansas State University has been named the No. 1 college in Kansas by Niche.com.

According to the Niche.com website, the Best Colleges ranking is based on rigorous analysis of academic, admissions, financial, and student life data from the U.S. Department of Education along with millions of reviews from students and alumni. Other factors included in the rankings are grades for value, professors, campus, diversity, student surveys, local area and safety.
Kansas State University’s College of Agriculture has again been recognized as a top 10 college by Niche.com in its annual Best Colleges for Agricultural Sciences ranking.

Of the 142 agriculture colleges and programs Niche.com compared for their 2022 list, K-State ranks No. 7.

The Niche.com ranking is based on an analysis of academic, admissions, financial and student life data collected by the U.S. Department of Education, plus millions of reviews from students and alumni.

“There are many great agricultural schools doing incredible research and engagement, while also doing a great job preparing students,” said Ernie Minton, dean of the K-State College of Agriculture. “I’m proud that K-State again ranks among the top.”

“In looking at the data and survey results they’ve collected, one thing that sets us apart is the quality and commitment of our faculty. Every year, the student and alumni surveys consistently put our faculty first in areas related to teaching and helping students be successful.”

Niche.com’s full listing of Best Colleges for Agricultural Sciences is available online.

**Forbes ranks university as a top 3 employer in Kansas**

The annual survey by Forbes magazine, "America’s Best Employers by State List," finds Kansas State University rates among the Top 3 employers in the state and is the best university employer in the Sunflower State.

K-State came in at No. 3 in 2021, up from No. 9 in 2020.

"Our faculty and staff are the heart of what we do at K-State and that has never been more evident than over the last year and a half," said Jay Stephens, vice president for Human Capital Services. "Making this a great place to work for everyone is always a priority."

As an employer, Stephens said the university's mission is to provide progressive, responsive and innovative solutions to attract, retain, develop and reward a highly talented, diverse and inclusive K-State community that cultivates an environment where students and employees flourish.

For the list, Forbes and Statista, a marketing research company, surveyed 80,000 workers from businesses with at least 500 employees. The rolling survey was conducted from October 2020 to June 2021 and in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. In the anonymous surveys, employees rated their employers on various criteria, including safety of work environment, competitiveness of compensation, opportunities for advancement and openness to telecommuting. Workers also were asked if they would recommend their employers to others.

Read more at forbes.com/best-employers-by-state/#17ce21b5487a.

**New $3.7 million NIH grant supports collaborative research into COVID-19 treatment**

As the fight against COVID-19 continues, Kansas State University has received a five-year, $3.7 million grant from the National Institutes of Health's National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases to research a new treatment method for the virus.

**K-State one of the top schools on Princeton Review's list**

When it comes to great schools for undergraduates, the Princeton Review puts Kansas State University among the Top 10 in the nation, the best in Kansas and the best in the Big 12 Conference.

The education services company profiles and
Kyeong-Ok "KC" Chang, a virologist at the Kansas State University College of Veterinary Medicine, is the principal investigator for the project, "Small Molecule Inhibitors Against 3C-Like Protease of SARS-CoV-2." The project's goal is to complete development of a drug for preclinical studies, ultimately leading to a COVID-19-specific antiviral therapeutic treatment.

"There is currently an urgent and unmet need for the discovery and development of antiviral therapeutics for the treatment of SARS-CoV-2, the causative agent of COVID-19," Chang said.

Yunjeong Kim, a virologist from Kansas State University, serves as co-principal investigator along with William C. Groudas, a medicinal chemist at Wichita State University; Stanley Perlman, a professor of microbiology and immunology from the University of Iowa; and Scott Lovell, a structural biologist at the University of Kansas.

Chang's group has been working on antiviral drug development against both human and animal coronaviruses for over a decade, with a focus on protease inhibitors.

"Recent advances of our efforts on the drug development include identification of potent compounds effective against SARS-CoV-2 confirmed by cell culture testing, X-ray co-crystallography and an animal model," Chang said.

Chang and Kim, along with Groudas and Perlman recently published new findings on SARS-CoV-2 treatment options.

Biology professor awarded NSF grant to study water and carbon fluxes

Jesse Nippert, professor in the Division of Biology, received a collaborative research award from the National Science Foundation to study the interaction between climate, bedrock and vegetation.

The project will explore how the interaction of plant roots and bedrock has changed water and carbon movement between the land and atmosphere. These fluxes in turn influence climate by altering important factors such as greenhouse gas concentrations. To understand how the land surface will interact with climate in the future, these scientists will differentiate how landscape bedrock and vegetation control water and carbon storage and movement, which locations are most likely to change, and how below-ground properties influence climate conditions now and in the future.

The five-year $412,000 award to K-State, funded by NSF Frontier Research in Earth Sciences, will support Nippert's role in an interdisciplinary project with Pam Sullivan, Oregon State University; Li Li, Penn State University; Alejandro Flores, Boise State; Sharon Billings, University of Kansas; Kamini Singha, Colorado School of Mines; and Daniel Hirmas and Hoori Ajami, from University of California, Riverside.

The project will address two questions: when and to what degree does bedrock exert more controls than roots on subsurface and atmosphere coupling, and what impact does this have on water and carbon fluxes. The broader impacts of this project include training 45 educators, including high school and recommendations K-State in the 2022 edition of its annual college guide, "The Best 387 Colleges." Kansas State University makes the list in 10 of the guide's 26 categories, including happiest students, most loved colleges, great quality of life, great career services, great residence halls and great health services. The guide also recommends the university for great town-gown relations, being among the best-run schools and being one of the best universities in the Midwest.

K-State also made the lists for great athletic facilities and great intramural sports.

K-State's 10 appearances in the guide are only topped by four other schools that made 11 of the guide's lists. Two other schools also had 10 list mentions.

"The Princeton Review lists confirm that Kansas State University is a place where students can thrive and succeed," said Thomas Lane, vice president for student life and dean of students. "Students can rely on our comprehensive network of support, including first-rate residence halls and dining centers, top-notch health and recreational facilities, and the academic support, such as dedicated advisors, tutoring and first-year success programs, that will help them finish their degrees and find successful careers."

The Princeton Review is not the only publication finding K-State as one of the best. The latest SmartAsset study finds K-State graduates command the highest average starting salaries in the state, and Niche.com just ranked K-State as the top university in Kansas.

In its newest guide, the Princeton Review does not rank the colleges in the book from 1 to 387. Instead, the company curated "Great Lists" of colleges in 26 categories. The lists name the colleges that have had a distinctive history of appearances on the ranking lists in past editions of the book over the years.

K-State College of Agriculture nabs No. 7 in latest Niche.com rankings

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undergraduate professors, to develop discovery-based learning approaches in their classrooms. The products will be made publicly accessible on the Science Education Resource Center's website on the "Teach the Earth" portal.

The project will leverage existing datasets and collect new data from the NSF Critical Zone Cluster Networks, or CZCNs; National Ecological Observatory Network, or NEON; and the Long-Term Ecological Research, or LTER, programs.

DID YOU KNOW?

K-State Research and Extension's Agricultural Research Center in Hays, KS celebrated their 120th anniversary in July.