



Inaugural President of the Walton STEM Institute

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WittKieffer

Contents

- 01** Executive Summary
- 03** Opportunities and Expectations for Leadership
- 05** Professional Qualifications and Personal Qualities
- 06** The Walton STEM Institute
- 11** Presidential Appointment
- 12** Bentonville, Arkansas
- 13** Procedure for Candidacy
- 14** Appendix

Executive Summary

The Walton Family seeks a visionary, creative, entrepreneurial, and collaborative leader deeply committed to innovation in STEM education to serve as the inaugural president of a new STEM Institute in Bentonville, Arkansas. The world is changing, with both the need and the opportunity to create a new, more flexible model of post-secondary education that builds a robust and globally competitive economy, while also serving as a national model for 21st century higher education.

Reflecting their unwavering dedication to excellence and improving lives through innovative solutions, the Walton family is making an extraordinary financial commitment to ensure the success of this new Institute, one that transforms the educational landscape of the State of Arkansas and serves as a national model for the future. As such, it will provide talented students with a unique educational experience that enables them to succeed throughout their careers, while responding to industry's need for a diverse, well educated, highly skilled, and highly adaptable workforce.

This is an exciting and unrivaled opportunity to reinvent higher education, preserving the verities of proven models while addressing 21st century societal needs in creative ways. This new leader will be charged with translating the vision of this singular 21st century college, one with a novel and flexible STEM pedagogy, within the context of a business infused, entrepreneurial ethos. Inquiries, nominations, and applications are invited.

This new Institute will initially offer bachelor's degrees and certificate programs – through a flexible, stackable curriculum – focused on innovation and advanced technology to meet growing demands in computing, AI, and IT; entrepreneurship and technological management; automation, robotics, and logistics; and health/medicine and technology. The Institute will build strong state-wide, community, and industry partnerships that will help keep the Institute's curriculum and degree programs highly relevant to the needs of business and on the cutting edge. It will also provide access to high quality, experiential learning opportunities for students and ensure they understand and can utilize AI to navigate, thrive in, and contribute to an increasingly digital world.

The Institute is part of the Walton family's larger commitment to help improve the quality of life, increase access to quality of healthcare, expand high-quality education opportunities, nurture an entrepreneurial talent pipeline, develop a skilled workforce, and build a diversified economy in Northwest Arkansas for everyone's benefit. The Institute's curriculum tracks – particularly those related to biomedicine, health, and technology – integrate well with the Heartland Whole Health Institute and the new Alice Walton School of Medicine goals of improving both the quality and availability of healthcare. More broadly, the Institute's non-credit and for-credit stackable credentials and degree programs will address critical workforce shortfalls at the intersection of STEM and business.

The Institute will draw on tested ideas from other distinctive and innovative STEM-focused schools and colleges, while emphasizing hands-on learning and a flexible curriculum delivered in a highly efficient way. The Institute's educational model is based on a set of credit and non-credit bearing stackable credentials. Students will have the opportunity to enter programs at multiple points in the curriculum and get the education they want and need that is most relevant for their career goals. Once finished, they can leave to pursue various career options, with the opportunity to return if or when they need new skills and additional education. A defining feature of the Institute – the Crucible – will enable and support non-classroom experiential education where ideas, lessons, and individuals are tested in real time in a “build it” teaching laboratory, emphasizing the applied nature of their learning.

Initially reporting to a small group of family and advisors and soon to an independent Board of Trustees, the inaugural president is responsible for visioning, strategic planning, operations, finances, faculty affairs, academic programs, and external relations in support of the Institute's goals, objectives, and aspirations. The inaugural president will provide leadership to develop and execute on the vision established for the Institute; recruit, develop, and retain faculty and staff; develop a leading-edge, innovative and agile curriculum, and innovative teaching practices; and engage a multitude of stakeholders and partners to develop strategic partnerships and cultivate support. The new president will support and nurture an environment of innovation where faculty, staff, and students can thrive.

In achieving these objectives, the inaugural president must be a collaborative leader who possesses the leadership skills, strategic capacity, and innovative spirit to build and advance the Institute. They will bring a founder's mentality to the role. Additional essential qualifications include successful leadership experience – preferably both in academia and industry; the communication and interpersonal skills to engage meaningfully with a broad range of highly invested stakeholders; deep intellectual curiosity and creativity to develop and support a diverse set of programs within a new model of education; a strong record of forging partnerships; and a commitment to advancing educational access. The inaugural president must possess a record of achievement required to merit the respect, trust, and confidence of the founding faculty and staff and the reputation to signal the level of excellence the Institute and its founders expect.

Opportunities and Expectations for Leadership

REALIZE THE VISION AND LAUNCH A TRANSFORMATIONAL NEW INSTITUTE

The inaugural president's most important priority is to bring the family's vision for its new STEM Institute to reality – in alignment with the family's commitment to excellence – and enroll the first class in August 2028. The family is committed to building a new academic campus and investing the resources needed to ensure success. The inaugural president will steward and invest those resources to achieve the ambitious goals of this new and transformational endeavor. This support allows the Institute to aggressively recruit top-tier faculty who will design and create a novel STEM curriculum infused with business ideas; build first-class teaching labs; secure state-of-the-art equipment; and invest in capital improvements and world-class infrastructure. The Institute is expected to open in August 2028. However, resources will be provided to begin hiring faculty and staff immediately. It will require tremendous focus, drive, and energy to achieve this goal on time and at an exceptional level of excellence.

RECRUIT THE FOUNDING FACULTY AND STAFF

One of the most important areas of initial focus for the inaugural president will be recruiting an outstanding founding leaders, faculty, and staff. These individuals will also be expected to be forward-looking, creative, and entrepreneurial and to enthusiastically embrace the vision for this new Institute. They must bring technical expertise and outstanding credentials as well as a mindset that aligns with the mission of the Institute. Recruitment will begin immediately and must proceed at a pace necessary to ensure full support for the first class of students in Fall 2028. The inaugural president will be expected to make a persuasive and compelling case for joining the Institute and have an exceptional eye for talent along with the ability to effectively recruit and negotiate with faculty and staff toward a successful outcome.

DEVELOP AN INNOVATIVE AND AGILE CURRICULUM

In concert with faculty hiring, the inaugural president will lead the development of the initial curriculum and innovative teaching practices for the Institute. While they will actively engage with other leaders across the country to identify distinguished and creative programs and practices, the model around which the Institute will be developed will have unique attributes. The president will build and shape this unique academic program that aligns with the vision for the Institute. Early degree and certificate programs will establish a curricular foundation that will then lead to new programs that attract new students and expand ways of meeting the need for life-long learning in the region and beyond.

The curriculum will be grounded in evidence-based high impact educational practices. Layered on top of those practices will be 21st century skills relevant to drive innovation and entrepreneurship and advance technology. Graduates will also be exposed to the liberal arts in novel ways that help them learn new and creative techniques to analyze and solve problems. They will also learn skills to communicate effectively to present and gain support for their ideas. Through this curriculum, the Institute will become a national model.

DEVELOP RELATIONSHIPS AND PARTNERSHIPS TO ADVANCE THE INSTITUTE

At the foundation of the inaugural president's work will be developing deep and collaborative relationships with multiple stakeholders whose support and participation are vital to success. This may include state legislators, higher education leaders, corporate executives, community leaders, and others.

Arkansas has created a business-friendly environment and, as such, companies are moving to Arkansas, bringing well-paying jobs and economic growth. Students graduating from the Institute will contribute to the workforce for these companies as well as nationally and internationally. This pipeline of highly educated, creative, and adaptable talent will attract other companies to the state. The inaugural president will invest in building strong, collaborative, and mutually beneficial relationships with companies in the region to enhance support for the program, provide opportunities for faculty and students, create job opportunities for graduates, and align curriculum to meet the evolving needs of the workforce.

The inaugural president will also engage with community leaders and organizations such as the Northwest Arkansas Council, area Chambers of Commerce and other economic development entities, as well as build ties to other educational institutions in the region. These relationships will enable the president to remain in touch with and highly responsive to the needs of business and the community.

ESTABLISH A NATIONAL BRAND AND VISIBILITY FOR THE INSTITUTE

The inaugural president must be an indefatigable brand ambassador for the Institute – selling the vision and opportunity to the state and the nation – while leveraging Walton family connections and ensuring the family is fully supportive. To succeed and differentiate itself, the Institute must have a national brand, one recognized as distinctive and envied for its ability to attract faculty and students of the highest caliber. The Institute's brand and reputation will be one that defines a new model of higher education, while also bringing an unprecedented level of educational talent to the state of Arkansas. Moreover, it must establish itself as an institution of remarkable quality. The family is engaging with branding and marketing consultants to support this work, and the inaugural president will have an opportunity to participate in shaping the brand.

Professional Qualifications and Personal Qualities

The Institute will embody a new vision for education – one that is business-infused, with STEM-focused innovation. The world and business are changing rapidly, and higher education must adapt. As such, candidates from a wide variety of backgrounds in both business and academia are welcome. The inaugural president must be a leader and doer with a record of accomplishment, a thirst for innovation, a founder’s mentality, and the ability to build a nimble organization, continually responsive to the needs of business.

The ideal candidate will have many, if not all, of the following experience and skills:

- Demonstrated history of dynamic, collaborative, innovative, and visionary leadership in business and/or academia. Significant leadership experience ranging from senior business leadership roles and collaborative research and development partnerships to senior academic leadership roles with a focus on STEM disciplines at leading national or international organizations.
- An understanding of the key challenges and issues confronting business and the ways in which new approaches to undergraduate and professional education in the STEM fields can better meet those needs.
- A distinguished record of accomplishment that embodies the quality and excellence of the Institute and a reputation that garners the respect, trust, and confidence of a faculty and staff of excellence.
- Prodigious energy, drive, and passion to build a new academic institution from the ground up.
- Ability to articulate and communicate the vision and strategic direction of the Institute in a compelling way.
- Demonstrated success in recruiting, retaining, and developing exceptional faculty and staff.
- Deep intellectual curiosity and creativity to develop and support a diverse set of innovative academic programs consistent with the Institute’s mission.
- Demonstrated fiscal planning, capital planning, and budget management skills.
- A record of developing successful relationships and engaging with donors, industry leaders, legislative, government, and community partners to generate advocacy and build strategic partnerships to realize a shared vision.
- Outstanding interpersonal and communication skills to engage meaningfully with a broad range of highly invested stakeholders as the spokesperson for the Institute.
- The qualities of leadership necessary to guide the Institute to success including integrity, a sense of urgency, excellent judgment, creativity, authenticity, patience, decisiveness, humility, and a willingness to listen to and engage stakeholders.
- An appreciation of Arkansas and its culture.



The Walton STEM Institute

VISION AND MISSION

The Institute's educational model is focused on STEM education with an experiential, hands-on orientation, along with a business-infused ethos and an entrepreneurial mindset. It is designed to meet 21st century workforce needs with a cadre of talented, well-prepared, and highly motivated students. Most importantly, it is committed to the very highest standards of excellence – in its instructors, its students, and its educational outcomes.

FOUR PILLARS

The Institute's four pillars are:

- | an unwavering commitment to the very highest quality,
- | a clear and focused STEM education mission,
- | a flexible hub and spoke educational model that includes multiple entry/exit points, and
- | a set of targeted knowledge domains that emphasize practical skills and the new knowledge economy.

All of these are coupled with deep business partnerships.

WALTON FAMILY SUPPORT

The Walton family is deeply committed to creating a novel, high quality undergraduate college. It is backed by five family members. Together, they are prepared to commit the necessary resources to construct the physical plant and endow the Institute.

The Walton family's philanthropic leadership is renowned for its focus on creating access and opportunity for people and communities. They have an exemplary track record of success in building other cultural and educational entities. Alice Walton commissioned the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, a world-class art facility, located in Bentonville, Arkansas. Construction is now underway on the new Alice L. Walton School of Medicine, with the inaugural class to be admitted soon. The family has also invested in the creation of the Thaden School, a private K-12 school, an extensive trail and mountain biking ecosystem, and a host of other entrepreneurial and quality of life initiatives. In turn, the Institute represents an unprecedented partnership of five family members.



PLANNING, FUNDING, AND CAPITAL PLANNING

PLANNING

Three phases of landscape assessment and planning have been conducted over the past two years. Phase one included interviews with national higher education leaders and state of Arkansas stakeholders (secondary school, college and university, government, other NGOs, and business). The results of these extensive interviews highlighted both the need for more flexible and workforce responsive higher education and the opportunity to strengthen the quality of Arkansas educational entities.

Phase two outlined a STEM-focused, business infused higher education entity that would deliver world-class education, based on stackable credentials and a flexible curriculum. This model emphasized hands-on learning via a mix of formal and informal education programs that allowed students to exit the program at multiple levels, from basic skills through advanced skills to undergraduate degrees.

Phase three focused on the pragmatics of creating the new institution. These included a detailed financial pro forma, site evaluation and selection, construction timelines, staffing specifications and hiring timelines, content creation and sourcing, and accreditation.

The new president is expected to work with the family and its organizations, along with outside consultants, to expand the high-level vision and translate that vision into reality. This will require detailed planning on all aspects of operating a higher education institution of extraordinary quality.

INITIAL FUNDING

The Walton family plans to support the construction of the campus and the hiring of the Institute's initial faculty and staff. The initial campus construction will be supervised by Walton family organizations, with input from the inaugural president. The family will also provide an endowment to both sustain the Institute and to ensure tuition is at affordable levels. Initial plans call for students' tuition to be fully covered to attract enterprising candidates with entrepreneurial spirit.

SPACE AND CAPITAL PLANNING

Current planning places the Institute in Bentonville, Arkansas. The space will be part of the mixed-use development planned for the former Walmart Home Office, where Sam Walton had his final office. A preliminary design estimates the required space at approximately 7.5 acres and just under 360,000 gross square feet, which would include academic and administrative space, the Crucible innovation space, student services, housing and dining for first year students, public safety, campus operations, and parking. With a focus on human-scale development, the campus and surrounding area will be walkable and bikeable.

Architectural firms are being hired to develop concepts and detailed facility plans, with construction to follow.



CURRICULUM AND PROGRAMS

The Institute's initial education tracks, which will evolve based on employer needs and technology shifts, are all STEM focused:

- computing, AI, and information technology
- entrepreneurship and technical management
- automation, robotics, and logistics
- health/medicine and technology

Each of the tracks includes hands-on practicums and internship programs to expose students to real world problems and relevant work environments.

The Institute and its emphasis on STEM-based, business-infused practical training of the highest quality has unique curriculum requirements. Because the curriculum model is new and different, it must be designed thoughtfully to be agile and an integrated whole.

FACULTY AND STAFF

The Institute will highlight its commitment to providing high-quality education and the opportunity for instructors to transform the lives of highly talented and motivated students via innovative teaching methods and a flexible curriculum. Business partnerships and the Institute's industry collaborations can provide instructors with opportunities for consulting, internships for students, and real-world projects that enhance teaching experiences.

Staff naturally divide into two cohorts. The first are those who can be sourced from the region. The others – national leaders in enrollment management, student life, digital learning, and allied academic skills – will rely on a national marketing and recruiting plan.



STUDENTS AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE

The Institute will focus on recruiting students of the highest quality. As such, it will seek to draw students from a national and international talent base, while also pursuing talented Arkansas students.

In addition to meeting regional workforce needs, the goal is to attract high quality talent (faculty and students) who would not otherwise consider Arkansas. While meeting current skill shortfalls, it will attract and train students for the new knowledge economy with world-leading, deep, and practical STEM skills with a business ethos.

Expected enrollment in the steady state is roughly 1,500 full-time for-credit students, plus roughly 500 non-degree students who are pursuing technical skills.

The Crucible is the Institute's learn-by-doing facility that combines hands-on "dirt under the fingernails" skills training, informed by and responsive to business problems and opportunities, with connections to entrepreneurial training and business processes. It is the laboratory where students work collaboratively and test their skills. It also supports student and team prototypes and both startup and existing companies.

The Institute will also have an Industry Advisory Committee (IAC), composed of regional and national industry leaders, which will provide regular feedback to the Institute's leadership and its instructors. The IAC will also be instrumental in ensuring business connections and partnerships.



PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS

A hub and spoke model is the organizational structure envisioned to coordinate the Institute's activities. The hub will focus on teaching critical, emerging, and high-quality skills (both degree and non-degree) and attracting high quality students to Northwest Arkansas. In turn, the spokes represent activities with other Northwest Arkansas organizations, focused on a combination of collaborative partnerships and growing the numbers and quality of workforce training or education in other educational entities. The spokes extend partnerships with regional entities spanning biomedicine, the arts, businesses, educational entities, and other non-profits.

Real-world work experience is an essential part of the Institute's flexible education model. Internships and co-operative education give students the opportunity to apply their classroom knowledge in real-world settings, both to expose them to workplace environments and to enable both companies and students to explore potential (future) employment matches. The Crucible is also the mechanism via which students can test classroom ideas against reality.

The Institute is intended to be complementary rather than competitive, focused on a particular set of high-demand STEM skills and on attracting new talent to Northwest Arkansas. It is also based on a flexible model of experiential education and business engagement that distinguishes it from other higher education programs. Finally, the Institute is designed to be small but mighty, drawing on a national talent pool.

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Universities are among the most important knowledge assets for cities and states, shaping the economic prospects of their regions and the nation overall. Creating a new STEM-focused university in Bentonville would represent a bold step to strengthen our region's innovation capacity and deepen our workforce. By embedding technology transfer and commercialization into the very fabric of the institution, we can accelerate the movement of ideas from the lab to the marketplace, drive economic growth across the Heartland, and create new opportunities for entrepreneurs and industries of the future.

— Ross DeVol, Chairman of the Board and CEO, Heartland Forward

Presidential Appointment

The Institute's inaugural president will serve in a full-time capacity with a 12-month appointment. Compensation will be highly competitive as will accompanying benefits. Ideally, the new president will begin in summer or fall 2025. The president will be expected to live full time in the Bentonville region.

Ultimately, the president will report to a self-perpetuating Board of Trustees, governed by institutional bylaws. National accreditation requires a clear institutional mission and set of published operating policies, along with an independent and respected oversight board.

The family is working to establish the 501(c)3 non-profit that would be the Institute. Until the trustees are in place, the president would report to a committee of family members and other advisors.

The president will work in collaboration with the trustees and the Institute's internal leadership to define and implement strategy and tactics. In the Institute's formative stages, the president will have broad responsibility for translating the high-level vision into practical reality.

Bentonville, Arkansas

Located in the heart of the Ozarks, Bentonville is a charming and rapidly growing city known for its innovative entrepreneurialism. Home to Walmart's global headquarters and the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville offers a unique blend of small-town charm and big-city amenities, making it an ideal destination for visitors and residents alike. With a population of 61,000, Bentonville boasts highly ranked private and public schools, award-winning chefs to hole-in-the-wall eateries, and a diverse range of outdoor and sports activities.

Northwest Arkansas is known for its outdoor amenities, including 500+ miles of bike trails and the beautiful Ozark Mountains. Northwest Arkansas is also one of the nation's dynamic economic regions serving as home to additional industry leaders such as Tyson Foods and J.B. Hunt. The presence of large companies, a burgeoning startup culture, and higher education drive Northwest Arkansas' economic growth.

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Bentonville is the perfect place to spark catalytic change — a community rooted in innovation, entrepreneurship and bold thinking. We have the opportunity to build a new model of higher education, designed for the realities of today's economy and the challenges of tomorrow, and set a new standard for what's possible.

— *Steuart Walton*

Procedure for Candidacy

Applications, nominations, and inquiries are invited. Applications should include, as separate documents, a CV or resume and a letter of interest addressing the themes in this profile.

WittKieffer is assisting the Walton Family in this search. Credential review will begin immediately, and the position will remain open until an appointment is made.

Applications, nominations, and inquiries can be directed to the WittKieffer consultants supporting the search – Suzanne Teer, Zachary Smith, Ph.D., and Julia Bradley – at WaltonInstitutePresident@wittkieffer.com.

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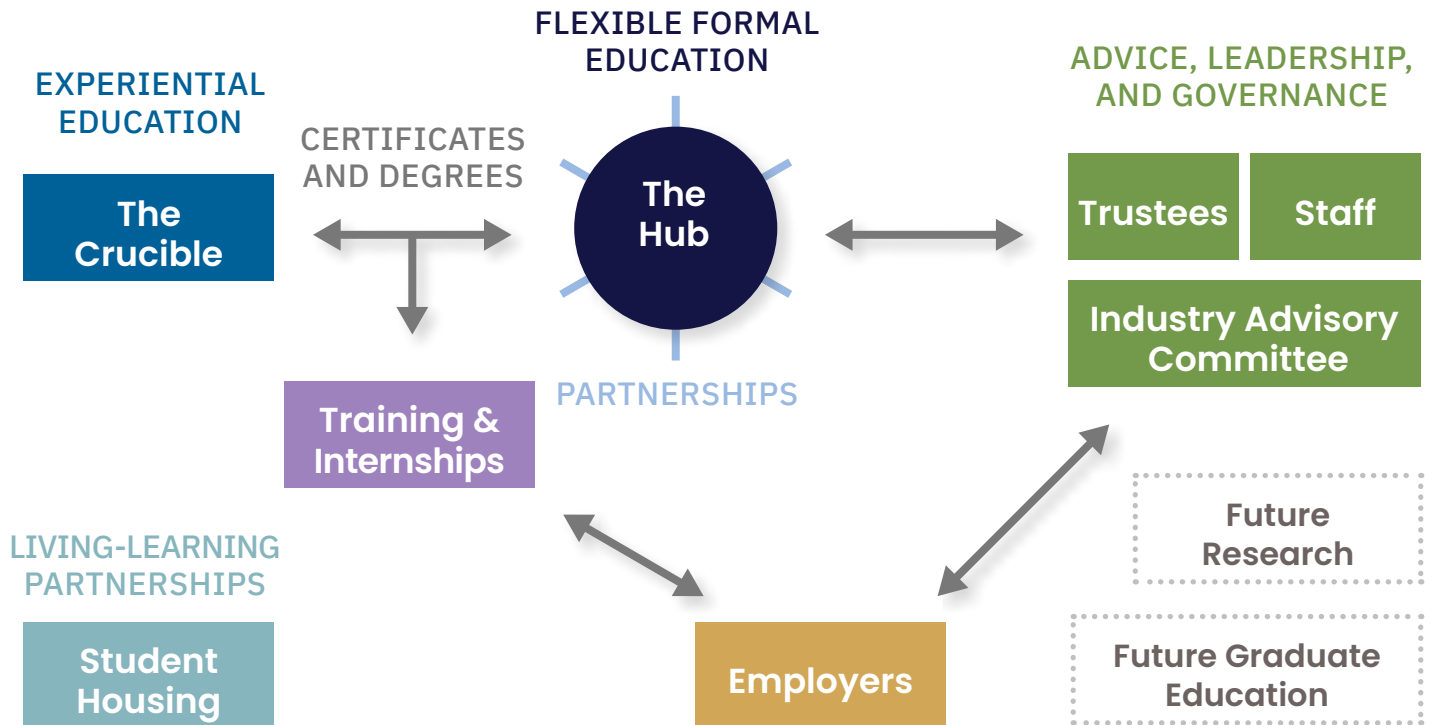
Appendix

NORTH STAR PRINCIPLES AND VALUES: THE EDUCATIONAL VISION

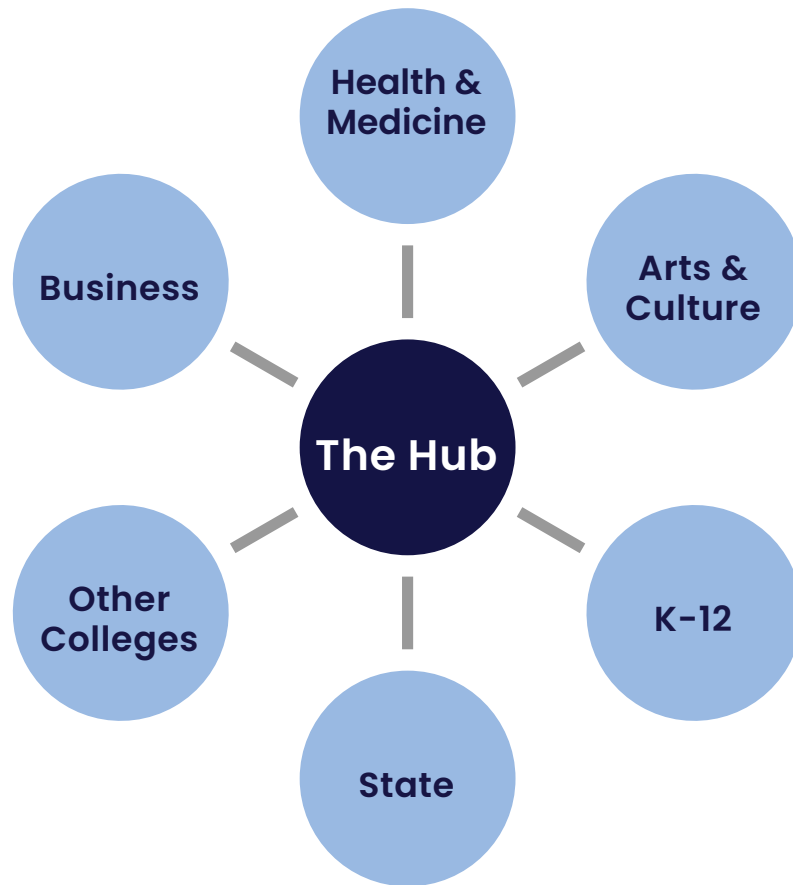


- Hands-on experiences
- Technical training
- Team orientation
- Hub and Spoke approach
- Flexible entry/exit
- Stackable credentials
- Internships/apprenticeships
- Quality driven
- Attracting national talent
- Avoiding historical baggage

THE INSTITUTE: AN INTEGRATED VISION



HUB AND SPOKE APPROACH



HUB

- Core academic operations
 - Degrees and certificates
 - Facilities and equipment
- Spoke collaboration and coordination

SPOKES

- Health and medicine collaborations
- Academic partnerships
- Arts and culture alliances
- K-12 experiential education and engagement
- State and regional economic development
- Other colleges and educational collaborations
- Business collaborations

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