

The logo for Bender of Twigs, featuring the words "Bender of Twigs" in a white, cursive script on a dark grey rectangular background.

Shawn Ehrstein

If you've met Shawn Ehrstein, chances are you remember him. Most days, he is easy to get along with – friendly, laid-back, calm. However, when necessary, he is a bulldog – stubborn, independent, strong-willed and outspoken. Both of these facets of his personality make him one of the most valuable assets to the WSU-NIAR team.

Shawn has been a part of the Wichita State family since the late 80's, earning a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering in 1992 and beginning his employment as a student assistant in the CAD/CAM Lab at the National Institute for Aviation Research. In 1996, he earned a master's degree in electrical engineering and began his full-time career as NIAR CAD/CAM Lab manager. In 1999, he became associate director of the lab, and completed an M.B.A from Wichita State in 2000. Since then he has advanced to director of CAD/CAM and Emerging Technologies, a title that, by no means, describes the significant contributions he has made to Wichita State University in his 25 years of employment.

Shawn has been a pioneer throughout his career. He began working with what is now WSU Tech (formerly Wichita Area Technical College) in the early 2000s to bring WSU-NIAR curriculum to students at the tech school. Naturally, when NIAR and WSU Tech joined under one roof at the National Center for Aviation Training in 2010, Shawn was there to lead the WSU-NIAR efforts to integrate laboratory spaces and tech college curriculum in an effort to better serve our aviation industry partners.

Just a couple short years later, when applied learning become a significant driver in industry partnerships, Shawn again took the lead on a pilot applied learning program with Bombardier Learjet that paved the way for many of the major partnerships Wichita State has now with organizations such as Spirit AeroSystems, Airbus, Textron and NetApp.

And when the first building on Innovation Campus was complete, it showcased the 3DEXPERIENCE Center, a partnership with Dassault Systèmes, under the leadership of none other than Shawn Ehrstein, of course. This center, featuring technologies in additive manufacturing, reverse engineering, robotics and extended reality, has led to university partnerships with BCG and Deloitte, placing Wichita State as a global leader in advanced manufacturing technologies.

It is hard to believe his accomplishments don't end there. Now Shawn is leading a talented group of more than 100 students supporting NIAR's digital twin efforts for the Department of Defense, which will give the DoD more autonomy to analyze its own aircraft, keeping them in peak condition until retirement.

Shawn is endlessly loyal and committed to keeping Wichita State at the forefront of the advanced manufacturing industry through the development of industry and government relationships; adoption of new technology and techniques; and mentoring and educating Wichita State and area high school students.

He is one of those exceptionally rare finds as a leader. Though he is extremely deserving, he doesn't demand attention or accolades, but he will demand the attention of the room if it is necessary to get his point across or accomplish an important task. He is a person that you want to have in your corner, whether that is in a high stakes meeting or in the corner of the bar sharing a laugh over beers.



Dr. John S. Tomblin Ph.D
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