

Taylor Geospatial Institute at SLU to help St. Louis train workers and create startups

St. Louis Public Radio | By Andrea Y. Henderson

Published April 21, 2022 at 6:23 PM CDT



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St. Louis Public Radio

Eight Midwest institutions partner to create a geospatial research and training center at St. Louis University. SLU President Fred Pestello said the center can help create a pipeline of diverse talent to build the region's economy.

Four St. Louis-area colleges are among eight institutions that will establish a geospatial research center at St. Louis University.

The Taylor Geospatial Institute aims to advance science by training new talent in geospatial science and health, national security and food security.

Joining SLU in the effort are the University of Missouri-St. Louis, Washington University in St. Louis and Harris-Stowe State University.

Other participants include the Donald Danforth Plant Science Center, University of Missouri-Columbia, Missouri University of Science & Technology and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

The center will create a pipeline of diverse talent to build the region's economy, St. Louis University President Fred Pestello said Thursday.

“The Taylor Institute will fuel innovation in an industry sector that will bring economic and employment development to the St. Louis region,” Pestello said.

Students and researchers can collaborate with faculty to study and create innovative ways to improve health care systems, develop high-quality national security technologies and design better farming methods.

Funding for the institute will be provided by the institutions and Andrew Taylor, executive chairman of Enterprise Holdings. Officials did not disclose the total investment.

“It is imperative that St. Louis have the world’s leading geospatial research institution,” said Taylor, chair of Greater St. Louis Inc., a business development organization that aims to help attract jobs. “It is my hope that this institute will cement St. Louis as the world’s true center for geospatial excellence.”

Partners in the institute say it will help the St. Louis region become a hub for technology education.

Harris-Stowe, one of Missouri’s two historically Black colleges, partnered with the National Geospatial Agency in October 2020 to provide STEM courses and resources to its students. Harris-Stowe administrators say the collaboration with the Taylor Geospatial Institute will help the university encourage more students of color to enter the geospatial field.

“At Harris-Stowe, we have entered the geospatial science world with excitement as we are developing faculty of curriculum and undergraduate research opportunities that has expanded our STEM academic enterprise, our joint faculty higher with St. Louis University,” Harris-Stowe President Latonia Collins Smith said.

She said the institute could increase the number of scientists and engineers of color in Missouri.

Institute leaders also hope the center will inspire students to create geospatial startups in the region.

“We are harnessing the power of partnership between industry, government agencies and research entities because only through collaboration can we fulfill the potential of geospatial technology and create a more equitable world,” Pestello said.

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