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## **WPC and UW-Oshkosh Receive \$50,000 WySis Grant to Study Workforce Development Issues in the Papermaking and Forestry Industries**

*Public/Private Collaborative Partnership Will Focus on Industry Workforce Challenges, Forecasts and Public Policy Solutions*

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Madison...The University of Wisconsin at Oshkosh and the Wisconsin Paper Council (WPC) have teamed up to launch a yearlong project to develop a strategic framework for the future of Wisconsin's paper industry.

The project is a collaborative effort between UW-Oshkosh's Center for Customized Research and Services (CCRS) and the Wisconsin Paper Council (WPC). The \$50,000 grant is one of several awarded funding under WiSys's Ignite! Program to provide faculty, staff, and students across the UW System's 13 comprehensive universities with opportunities to apply their knowledge to build the state's economy. This particular endeavor will be focused primarily on workforce development challenges and future needs of the papermaking and forestry industries.

The timing of this project, which emphasizes the roles of talent, innovation and sustainability as keys to the industry's future, comes at a critical time for the WPC and its membership. Decreasing demand for converted paper products has accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic as the industry also adapts to changing workplace needs.

*"The Wisconsin Paper Council is excited about this opportunity to partner with UW-Oshkosh on this important workforce development study," stated Scott Suder, President of the Wisconsin Paper Council. "The paper and forestry industries are key drivers for Wisconsin's economy and this comprehensive analysis of our business sectors' workforce development challenges and future needs will be an invaluable resource for both our stakeholders and for policymakers."*



The project scope includes a series of comprehensive industry surveys, the convening of industry expert panels, student-directed innovation and sustainability assessments and several stakeholder sessions. In addition, the project scope will continue to adapt to the challenges of COVID-19 by convening both small group and industrywide virtual listening sessions, which will engage experts from across UW Oshkosh as well.

*"Wisconsin's paper and pulp industries have proven particularly resilient throughout the state's history. They represent both a success story and part of the state's legacy as they continue to provide vital products and services," said Jeffrey Sachse, CCRS's interim director. "The breadth and depth of the industries' economic footprint also provides substantial opportunities for innovation and growth. This project affords us the chance to gain insight from industry leaders and develop new collaborative strategies."*

CCRS is recognized as an important driver of regional economic development through the strategic connection of UWO talent, intelligence and innovation to Wisconsin businesses and organizations.

Ignite Grants, formerly known as Applied Research Grants, encourage researchers to use their expertise and apply their scholarship to support growth in Wisconsin.

The Wisconsin Paper Council (WPC) is the premier trade association which advocates for the papermaking industry before regulatory bodies, state and federal legislatures to achieve positive policy outcomes. WPC also works to educate the general public about the social, environmental, and economic importance of paper, pulp, and forestry production in Wisconsin and throughout the Midwest.

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