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Marshall University's Innovation District: A Hub for Cybersecurity and Beyond



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Toney Stroud is an accomplished attorney with more than 24 years of experience in complex compliance and regulatory issues. Prior to joining Marshall as Chief Legal Officer/General Counsel, he was an Assistant Vice President at Encova Insurance where he managed outside counsel in 28 states related to litigation, contracts, administrative regulatory matters, and insurance coverage issues. Stroud is actively involved in the community, serving as chairman of the board of the Huntington Regional Chamber of Commerce, secretary of the Education Alliance, and chairman of the advisory board of Marshall's College of Engineering and Computer Sciences.

When you travel to Huntington, West Virginia, you can feel the energy. Whether it is the campus of Marshall University hustling and bustling with students or the downtown eateries overflowing on a weekend night, there is something in the air – a sense of renewal, hope, and future prosperity. Marshall University's planned Innovation District is a big part of this excitement.

The district is more than just part of a college campus or a city block – it will be a vibrant ecosystem of innovation that expands academic offerings and aligns with Marshall's mission to grow economic development. Within this new district, visionary programs take root, designed not only to foster innovation but also to cultivate sustainable job opportunities. Through workforce



in the 2016 West Virginia Forward Study. The district will be powered by the strategic growth areas of advanced energy and manufacturing, aviation, healthcare, cybersecurity, and entrepreneurship. The \$250 million district is anchored by the new \$45 million Brad D. Smith

“...private sector growth not only fuels economic growth in West Virginia, it also provides careers for students to stay here in the Mountain State.”

development initiatives, the university's district propels West Virginians into the future, equipping them with the skills needed for tomorrow's industries. It's a place where businesses are born, nurtured, and expanded through cutting-edge innovation and commercialization. With a blend of workspaces and modern residential housing, it creates a live/work/play environment that beckons businesses and residents alike, while shaping a platform for progress and prosperity.

Marshall University's Innovation District is committed to serving as a roadmap for economic growth and is anchored by the principles found

Center for Business & Innovation and the new \$45 million Institute for Cyber Security, and will also include an Innovation Resource Hub for our student entrepreneurs and Marshall's Advanced Manufacturing Center, which serves more than 300 companies and more than 700 workers each year. Between these components, this district will be a hotbed of activity, exploration, and cutting-edge development, bringing together public and private investment, and nurturing unique opportunities for students who wish to gain footholds in the industries that play key roles in the state's economy.



Rendering of Marshall University's 4th Avenue Innovation District; Innovation District map below.



The Cyber Security Institute: Safeguarding the Future

A key component within this district is the Institute for Cyber Security – a beacon of expertise, a hub for cutting-edge research, and a testament to Marshall University's unwavering commitment to leading the charge in cybersecurity. This impressive 80,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art facility will also be home to 13 specialized laboratories. Among these, the Security Operations Center (SOC) serves as central command, orchestrating real-time defense against critical infrastructure cyber threats. The Open Source lab will offer information and analysis to assist law enforcement, focusing on information that can be gathered legally from free public sources. In addition, an Internet of Things lab will be dedicated to securing the ever-expanding network of interconnected devices.

Marshall University's Institute for Cyber Security stands out for its steadfast dedication to safeguarding the nation's critical infrastructure, exemplified by the Smart City lab, which explores

the digital infrastructure of future urban landscapes. Recognized by the U.S. National Security Agency (NSA) as a national center of academic excellence in cyber defense, this recognition only helps to accelerate Marshall as an east coast hub for cybersecurity. Couple the NSA designation with critical academic partnerships with higher education institutions, like West Virginia University and West Virginia State University, our collective impact in this global sector will only strengthen.

Cybersecurity is an indispensable component in preserving the digital technology upon which all individuals rely, from power grids to healthcare systems. The Institute fully recognizes the paramount importance of cybersecurity and actively engages in research and initiatives that directly impact the resilience of vital systems, which serve as the bedrock of our nation's security and well-being. This Institute embodies the university's commitment to innovation, education, and the protection of critical infrastructure, ultimately shaping a more secure and resilient future for all.

Economic Opportunities on the Horizon

The Innovation District at Marshall University is quickly becoming a catalyst for economic growth in West Virginia; it fosters an environment that encourages creativity, collaboration, and advanced research. Its appeal lies not only in its state-of-the-art facilities and abundant resources, but also in its ability to attract businesses, talent, and investments to West Virginia and provide a level playing field for start-ups to emerge. New businesses are already recognizing the immense value of being part of a dynamic hub of innovation. Furthermore, private sector growth not only

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fuels economic growth in West Virginia, it also provides careers for students to stay here in the Mountain State.

This holistic approach to education and economic development not only nurtures a skilled workforce but also draws talent from across the region and beyond, assisting in solidifying West Virginia's position as a sought-after destination for innovation and prosperity. Put simply, Marshall University is doing its part to highlight and share what we all know and appreciate – West Virginia is a great place to live, work, and play. 