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UWF assistant professor to attend makerspace roundtable at White House

Pensacola, Fla. – Aug. 23, 2016 – Thomas Asmuth, an assistant professor in the University of West Florida Department of Art, will travel to the White House on Aug. 24 to participate in a roundtable discussion at an event called “The Nation of Makers.”

Asmuth teaches new media at the University and works on art projects that meld science and technology.

He is also the founder and president of Emerald Coast Community of Makers, a makerspace shop located on North Guillemard Street in Pensacola. “Makerspace” is defined as a community-operated work space where people with common interests in computers, machines, technology, science and digital art and other areas, meet, socialize and collaborate on projects.

“The Nation of Makers” focuses on people who organize makerspace events.

Asmuth responded to a survey about two weeks ago that the Office of Science and Technology Policy at the White House sent out.

“It was very basic,” Asmuth said. “They were just collecting data about makerspaces in general, and I thought it would be nice to see a pin on the OSTP makerspace map where Pensacola is. I just about fell over when they got back to me and invited me to the White House.”

Roundtable discussions at “The Nation of Makers” are designed to help organizations strategize about growth and sustainability.



Topics to be covered at the White House meeting include legal structures for nonprofit organizations, methods for measuring benefits to the community, ways to cope with burnout, devices for maintaining diversity and inclusion and plans for developing mentorships within organizations and other issues.

“I’m pleased that I’m going to be meeting with people who will be associated with partnerships between makers and spaces, including some universities from around the nation,” Asmuth said. “Hopefully, I will come back with a report that can inform us of how we might have a makerspace at UWF sometime in the future.”

The trip is supported by a grant from the University of West Florida Center for Research and Economic Opportunity.

“Thomas is exactly the right person to be representing UWF at this White House event,” said Dr. Brice Harris, assistant vice president of research and economic opportunity at UWF. “At its core, the maker movement is about empowering individuals to translate their unique thoughts and ideas into creative works and innovative product solutions. The implications for entrepreneurship and advanced manufacturing are tremendous. I believe the contributions Thomas will make to the national discourse while attending the event will be important, and he will return home with new ideas and best practices that will enhance our understanding of the burgeoning role makerspaces are playing in higher education.”

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