

## MINUTES OF THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Steve Abrams at 1:30 pm on Wednesday, March 04, 2015, 144-S of the Capitol.

All members were present

Committee staff present:

Mark Savoy, Legislative Research Department  
Lauren Douglass, Legislative Research Department  
Erna Fabert, Kansas Legislative Committee Assistant  
Jason Long, Office of Revisor of Statutes

Conferees appearing before the Committee:

Dr. Roger Schieferecke, Director, Kansas Academy of Mathematics and Science  
Alex Wohler, KAMS Student  
Brianne Little, KAMS Student  
Prerona Kundu, KAMS Student  
Dr. Mirta Martin, President, Fort Hays State University  
Elsie Suhr, KAMS Alumna  
Andi Darden, KAMS Alumna

Others in attendance:

[See Attached List](#)

Chairperson Abrams asked for a motion to approve the minutes previously sent to committee members for review.

Senator Arpke moved, Senator Baumgardner seconded, to approve the minutes of the February 3, February 4, February 10 and February 12, 2015 Senate Education Committee meetings. Motion carried.

### **Presentation on:**

Chairperson Abrams introduced Dr. Roger Schieferecke, KAMS Director, who introduced Prerona Kundu, Brianne Little, Alex Wohler, Dr. Mirta Martin, Andi Darden and Elsie Suhr. ([Attachment 1](#))

Alex Wohler explained that KAMS provides a residential learning experience on the Fort Hays State University (FHSU) campus for exceptional high school juniors and seniors with an interest in mathematics and science. Students receive both a completion certificate from FHSU and a high school diploma from their sending school.

Brianne Little spoke about the hands-on research experience students receive with PhD-level faculty, and the professional presentations the students make before graduation, as being one of the drawing points of KAMS. She took her geoscience project to the state level and also made a presentation here at the state capitol recently.

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Prerona Kundu spoke about how closely the advisors work with the students and also described living arrangements and student life on campus, which encompasses almost all areas other than participation in fraternities and sororities. She also had great praise for the KAMS staff.

Dr. Roger Schieferecke spoke about a new program, the KAMS summer academy, which introduces students to KAMS and makes science fun for students through a series of six one week camps. By keeping costs low they hope to provide access for up to 180 students.

Elsie Suhr, a former KAMS student, reported that she was in the second KAMS class and graduated in 2012 at the age of 17, going on to finish her bachelor's degree at Kansas State University at the age of 19 and now at the age of 21 she is pursuing her doctorate.

Andi Darden had a similar success story. She was in the first KAMS class, attending the course because she was not academically challenged at her school. She did research in behavioral psychology, graduated within 3 years from her university program and is also now pursuing her doctorate. Andi stressed that students get such an amazing head start in their education by attending KAMS.

Senator Hensley asked for a point of order to introduce Connie Jacobson and several students from Topeka West High School.

From questioning by Committee members, it was learned that many of the students learned about KAMS through their gifted teachers in high school, other students who had participated in KAMS and through presentations made at their schools or places where they were receiving rewards for their academic achievement.

Dr. Martin stated that FHSU doesn't have a huge public relations campaign to attract students to KAMS since they are trying to apply almost all of the funding directly into the program, however, since there are so few gifted programs in the state, she feels the college has something special to promote. Dr. Martin was also excited by the fact that over 89% of the KAMS students stay in Kansas and go to state universities.

Chairperson Abrams asked the students what their future plans and goals look like. Andi Darden indicated she will pursue post doctoral education, possibly teaching and doing research in the area of behavioral psychology. Elsie Suhr indicated she has three more years in her Ph.D. program and she is interested in food science and animal science. Alex Wohler stated he will probably be pursuing a degree in the medical field. Brianne Little is planning to pursue a degree in either chemical engineering, the pharmaceutical field or in veterinary medicine. Prerona Kundu will most likely pursue a masters degree in nuclear engineering, possibly in the clean energy field.

Chairperson Abrams thanked each of the students for presenting to the Committee and summed up the

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feeling of all the members by stating - I like KAMS a lot!

He then reminded committee members that there will be no meeting Thursday, March 5 or Friday, March 6 and then adjourned the meeting at 2:05 pm.

The next meeting of the Senate Education Committee will be Tuesday, March 10, 2015 at 1:30 pm in Room 144-S of the Capitol.