



**NEUTRAL Testimony on SB 388
For the Senate Education Committee
February 9, 2016**

**Matt Lindsey
President, Kansas Independent College Association**

Chairman Abrams and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to come before you to provide neutral testimony concerning Senate Bill 388. SB 388 instructs the Board of Regents to develop policies to award credit to students for successful completion of the CLEP (College Level Examination Program) series of tests.

Why Neutral Testimony:

Per the definitions cited in the bill, the higher education institutions explicitly addressed by SB 388 only include those that are governed by the Kansas Board of Regents. The 18 non-profit independent colleges and universities that are part of KICA are not governed by the Board of Regents, hence our treasured status as “independent” colleges. We are grateful for continued respect for that independence, which this bill provides. Thus, because we are not the subject of SB 388, my testimony today is of an informational nature.

It is important to reiterate that there is no central governing body for the 18 KICA institutions. Thus, we have a wide range of approaches to this issue. However, given the central importance of maintaining and increasing undergraduate student enrollment for our institutions in order to both serve our mission and keep our doors open, all of our colleges actively pursue any initiative that could attract additional students without comprising our mission or core philosophies around character-based education and personal attention. As such CLEP is a tool we see value in and have for many years.

CLEP among the KICA Institutions:

Of the 36 CLEP examinations offered by the College Board, nearly all are accepted by at least half of the KICA institutions. Attached is a chart showing how many KICA institutions accept that test, and the average minimum score required in order to earn college credit. In addition, most KICA colleges have a cap in place on the total number of hours a student may bring in via CLEP exams, AP exams, and the International Baccalaureate program. This is commonly either 15 hours or 30 hours, essentially the equivalent of one or two full-time semesters, respectively. The Higher Learning Commission, our regional accrediting body, has also limited the maximum number of course credits that can be awarded through these mechanisms to 75% of the credits necessary to graduate, usually equivalent to approximately 90 hours for a bachelor’s degree.

CLEP scores are graded on a scale of 20 to 80, with 80 being a perfect score. The American Council on Education (ACE) recommends that for institutions wishing to award credit and assign a letter-grade, that a score

of 50 is equivalent to a grade of “C” in the equivalent college-offered course. A few institutions, including one or two colleges in KICA, go further and award a letter grade of a “B” for scores at or above a higher number. Depending on the test, this ranges from 53 (American Literature) to 69 (French II). However, neither the College Board (who administers the CLEP exams), nor ACE officially endorse this approach. Possible threshold scores for the “B” level are suggested, but both entities defer to the judgement of individual institutions on this question. There is likewise no sanctioned standard for translating CLEP exam performance to earning a letter grade of “A” in a college course. KICA institutions only do so in the rarest of individual circumstances and even in those cases, the policies involve looking at the student’s entire body of work.

In the current academic year (2015-2016), a total of 153 incoming freshmen at KICA institutions were awarded credit for CLEP exams. This is out of approximately 3,900 incoming first-time, full-time freshmen new to KICA institutions this year. Over the past few years, as long as we have been tracking it KICA-wide, this number has varied between 140 and 190 students.

Conclusion:

As this data show, KICA institutions see CLEP (and other forms of prior-learning assessment mechanism) as a valuable, though perhaps not revolutionary, tool in our efforts. I hope my neutral testimony in this particular instance demonstrates our support, in theory, of encouraging acceptance of these exams while emphasizing our gratitude that this body continue to respect, as SB 388 does, our independence to plot our own course as befits our particular missions and profiles. I am happy to answer any questions you may have or provide additional data as you request.

KICA Institutions and Course Credit for CLEP Exams

Exam	# of Institutions Accepting	Average Min. Grade
Business		
Financial Accounting	7	52.86
Information Systems & Computer Applications	15	51.27
Introductory Business Law	14	51.50
Principles of Management	13	51.00
Principles of Marketing	13	51.62
Composition & Literature		
American Literature	16	50.75
Analyzing and Interpreting Literature	15	51.13
College Composition	6	50.00
College Composition Modular	6	50.00
English Literature	16	50.75
Humanities	12	51.33
History & Social Sciences		
American Government	16	51.44
History of the United States I	16	50.69
History of the United States II	15	50.60
Introductory Sociology	16	50.94
Social Sciences & History	12	52.00
Western Civilization I	16	50.63
Western Civilization II	16	50.44
Principles of Macroeconomics	15	50.80
Principles of Microeconomics	15	50.73
Introductory Psychology	15	50.93
Introduction to Educational Psychology	15	51.40
Human Growth & Development	16	51.38
Science & Mathematics		
Calculus	15	50.33
College Algebra	15	50.60
College Mathematics	12	51.83
Pre-calculus	8	53.75
Biology	16	50.56
Chemistry	16	51.44
Natural Sciences	12	51.92
World Languages		
French I	15	51.53
French II	13	57.08
German I	14	50.00
German II	13	56.62
Spanish I	15	51.47
Spanish II	13	59.31
<i>Data is from 2013 internal KICA survey</i>		