

Chairman Masterson and members of the Ways and Means Committee,

Wichita Area Technical College, Wichita State University and the local industry board members of WATC are here today to ask that you recommend SB 451 favorably for passage. That action will enable WATC and WSU to continue to work towards a merger of the two institutions. Mergers like these are the future of higher education where institutions with capabilities in various fields come together for the betterment of students, business and the communities they serve.

SB 451 is permissive; it gives legislative approval to proceed with the process of a merger. The merger will not be complete until HLC accreditation approval. This bill is also revenue neutral to the state and all interested parties. The bill also allows higher education funding to follow each institution if future merger talks happen among other higher education institutions. This is important because this merger and others cannot continue if the revenue sources do not follow the institutions involved.

SB 451 allows WATC to focus even more on the critical need of workforce development and the needs of Kansas industry. The local industry board remains and will advise the President and Executive Director/Dean of the new School at Wichita State University. This new school will be vital to meet the mission and vision of Wichita State University for applied learning and research and the development of the innovation campus.

We are here today asking for your support prior to HLC accreditation approval so that we do not put the State legislature in the position of having to retroactively give approval.

Sincerely,

John Bardo
President, Wichita State University

Sheree Utash
President, Wichita Area Technical College

John O'Leary
Vice President & General Manager, Airbus Americas Engineering