

Chair Aurand and member of the House Education Committee,

At Wichita State University, the economic success of our students and the state of Kansas is at the very heart of what we do. It's written directly into the DNA of the university and it informs every decision that we make.

For that reason, I am writing to urge support for Senate Bill 174, to enable the affiliation of Wichita State University and Wichita Area Technical College to create the WSU Campus of Applied Sciences and Technology.

We feel that this natural and long-standing partnership is simply a necessity to ensure that the state of Kansas remains competitive with its neighbors and attractive to companies looking to explore new approaches to innovation, creativity and research.

The affiliation we hope to undertake is a new collaborative educational model – one that has tremendous promise to expand the Kansas economy, provide more Kansans with access to the GED to Ph.D. continuum, and improve the earnings potential and quality of life for thousands of Kansans.

Wichita State and Wichita Area Technical College are already notably responsive to industry needs. But we feel this responsiveness can and should be maximized. The proposed WSU Campus of Applied Sciences and Technology will be uniquely positioned to serve the needs of Kansas industry, training students not merely in hypothetical concepts but in the exact skills and proficiencies required by the market at a given point in time.

Combining instructional flexibility with Wichita State's applied learning focus, student support functions and employer connections will be a catalyst for a major increase in the number of highly skilled workers who are ready to contribute to Kansas businesses from their very first day on the job.

The proposed affiliation will be able to deliver all of these tangible advantages with no net cost and with no change to the institutional funding formulas currently in.

As the state continues to fight through an economic slowdown and budget shortfalls, this is no time to continue to bet on the status quo. The WSU/WATC affiliation is a pioneering educational concept and important opportunity. The advantages stemming from the affiliation of WSU and WATC will immediately benefit Kansas companies in practically every industry sector and the growth in skilled workers will provide a strong incentive for out-of-state companies exploring relocation options.

We also believe that the WSU-WATC affiliation will be vital in helping combat the "brain drain" effect – the ongoing trend of recent college graduates leaving Kansas in search of employment opportunities. The Kansas economy simply cannot reach its potential while

continuing to lose talented graduates to other states. **Wichita State University already has the highest rate of in-state job placement and income among traditional Regents institutions.** We think it is self-evident that students with a clear, direct path to employment through the WSU Campus of Applied Sciences and Technology will be more likely to complete their programs of study and much more likely to stay in the state of Kansas after doing so.

No net cost. Responsiveness to industry. Greater access to higher education. Economic success for all stakeholders. With those points in mind, I ask that you give your full consideration and support to Senate Bill 174.

John Bard  
President  
Wichita State University