

February 20, 2017

Chair McGinn and Members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee:

Talking about the need for a well-educated, highly skilled workforce is easy. But in today's economy, merely talking about the challenges facing us is no longer an option. The time has come to act.

The proposed affiliation of Wichita State University and Wichita Area Technical College to create the WSU Campus of Applied Sciences and Technology has my complete support. I believe it will be an essential factor in job creation and process efficiency for the state's economy for years to come.

At Spirit AeroSystems, we understand the importance of innovation and the need for skilled workers. The proposed WSU Campus of Applied Sciences and Technology offers an efficient, customer-centered approach to training and education for the needs of Kansas industry.

Kansas companies need access to a skilled, job-ready workforce to thrive. By providing a clear sequence of education courses and credentials that meet the skill needs of high-demand industries, the affiliation 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 first day on the job.

The demand for skilled workers is increasing at the same time the educational attainment level of American workers is declining. Too often our systems for preparing low-skilled youth and adults with marketable and in-demand skills can be complex and difficult to navigate for students, job seekers, and employers.

The combined efforts of WATC and Wichita State University promote the use of a state university campus without inter-institutional concerns and red tape. It allows national and international advertising for degree and certificate programs that are important to this region, where potential employees are in limited supply.

This affiliation also is a fiscally responsible choice, without extensive up-front costs usually associated with partnerships of this type. Given the current fiscal realities facing the state, this is a key consideration.

Another benefit is that 95 percent of current WATC students are from Sedgwick County, so this affiliation increases the likelihood of students staying in the area to pursue their careers.

WSU and WATC have a long-standing track record of effective cooperation. In 2010, they created the National Center for Aviation Training in partnership with Sedgwick County. The Center has helped the local aviation industry by equipping students with the latest in hands-on, industry-driven manufacturing training.



They have also bridged the gap between their curricula through Shocker Pathway, a program that provides an affordable, convenient, and respected way to start at WATC and finish as a Shocker – earning a two-year Associate of Arts degree from WSU.

But now the two institutions are thinking bigger – pursuing a natural progression of their relationship that promises to spur economic growth through educational and workforce development.

I respectfully ask you to support the WSU/WATC affiliation as outlined in Senate Bill 174.

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Spirit AeroSystems