



KANSAS BOARD OF REGENTS

1000 SW JACKSON • SUITE 520 • TOPEKA, KS 66612-1368

TELEPHONE – 785-296-3421
FAX – 785-296-0983
www.kansasregents.org

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BOARD CONCLUDES STATEWIDE BUSINESS & INDUSTRY ROUNDTABLE TOUR

Business Leaders Believe Higher Education Is Critically Important for the State's Future

(TOPEKA) – Yesterday, during its December meeting, the Kansas Board of Regents received a summary of its recently-concluded statewide Business and Industry Roundtable tour. The 12-city tour, which took place between October 20 and November 30, gave the Regents an opportunity to interact with business leaders in every corner of the state. Over 400 business leaders attended the roundtable events, which focused on enhancing and strengthening the critical link between the state's public higher education system and the workforce and economic goals of the state.

“Local businesses and the state's higher education institutions are important partners when it comes to the health of the Kansas economy; they possess a unique symbiotic relationship. The Kansas economy won't grow without successful businesses, and businesses won't reach their full potential without the highly-skilled workers that are produced by the state's public higher education system,” said Regent Jill Docking of Wichita, the Chair of the Kansas Board of Regents. “As I visited with local business leaders across the state, it was apparent that workforce shortages are affecting each and every community. It was also clear that business leaders value higher education and are concerned about the state's ongoing trend of disinvestment in its higher education system.”

Roundtables were held in Emporia, Garden City, Hays, Hutchinson, Lawrence, Liberal, Manhattan, Overland Park, Pittsburg, Salina, Topeka, and Wichita. At the conclusion of each meeting, business leaders were asked to complete a survey focused on higher education and the workforce. The survey produced the following key results:

- 100% agree that higher education is critical for economic development in Kansas.
- 100% agree that higher education will help supply the future workforce needed for Kansas to succeed.
- 100% agree that higher education improves the general quality of life in the state.
- 89% say their community has a shortage of qualified workers.
- 88% say elected officials in Topeka should make higher education a higher priority, and 0% say it should be a lower priority.
- 83% believe that further reductions in state funding will put the quality of higher education in KS at risk.

- 72% say state funding for higher education should be increased, 28% say funding should be maintained at its current level, and 0% say funding should be decreased.

“Because higher education is an engine for economic growth, the state should invest in its higher education system in order to lay the foundation for its future economic recovery. The feedback we received from business leaders across the state certainly doesn’t support the state’s trend of disinvestment in higher education,” said Docking. “Business leaders were inquisitive, offered helpful feedback, and suggested ways to enhance the higher education system. This is really just the first step of our outreach to the business community, and we certainly look forward to strengthening this important bond.”

The complete Roundtable summary can be found on the Board’s website at the following link:

<http://www.kansasregents.org/download/news/121609%20-%20B&I%20Summary.pdf>

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About the Kansas Board of Regents:

The nine-member Kansas Board of Regents is the governing board of the state’s six universities and the statewide coordinating board for the state’s 32 public higher education institutions (seven public universities, nineteen community colleges, and six technical colleges). In addition, the Board administers the state’s student financial aid, adult education, GED, and career and technical education programs. The Board also authorizes private proprietary schools and out-of-state institutions to operate in Kansas, and administers the Kan-ed network, a statewide network that provides broadband Internet access and distance learning capabilities for schools, hospitals, and libraries.

For more information, contact Kip Peterson at (785) 296-3421 or at kpeterson@ksbor.org.

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