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# FREE CTE

COLLEGE TUITION AND CERTIFICATION

# FUNDING:

KS SB155 AT WORK

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By Martin Kollman and Lisa Beck

In January 2012, Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback introduced a plan to enhance career and technical education (CTE) in Kansas and better prepare high school students for college and careers. The legislature responded to this plan with Senate Bill 155 (SB155), providing free college tuition for high school students taking postsecondary CTE courses, as well as offering incentives to school districts for students earning industry-recognized credentials in high-demand/-wage occupations. This CTE initiative is part of Gov. Brownback's "Road Map," which includes increasing the number of high school graduates who are college- and career-ready, and it has received national recognition as one of the "Top Ten Innovations to Watch" from the Brookings Institute.

"Career and technical education programs are a great way for high school students in Kansas to obtain real-world knowledge and skills that will help them immediately—whether that's to begin their career after high school or to get a job that will help pay their way through college," said Gov. Brownback. "As business demand continues to increase, we must work to reverse the trend of the decreasing supply of CTE-certified workers."

### Free CTE Tuition

The state-funded program covers CTE students' tuition costs for CTE courses taken at any of Kansas's two-year postsecondary institutions, offering many students the opportunity to earn concurrent credit while still in high school. This model has become one of the most popular initiatives in Kansas CTE. By the end of the first semester in December 2012, approximately 3,500 students were taking advantage of the free tuition, and it was obvious that the original funding set aside in SB155 was

not going to be enough. The state rallied behind its vision and increased funding to \$11.5 million this past spring, ensuring that every student had the opportunity to take college-level CTE courses.

More CTE students than ever are attaining transcribed credit and industry credentials (54 percent increase in credit hours over the 2011–2012 academic year); thus making the transition to postsecondary easier, better preparing the students to enter the workforce and giving them an increased awareness of CTE-related occupations. "For Kansas to compete in the marketplace, we need to meet the rising business demand of a well-trained workforce," Gov. Brownback said. "Early results are in, and I'm happy to announce the action we took to better prepare students for college and careers looks very promising for the future."

Due to the high demand of concurrent enrollment across the state—over 43,000 credit hours—the collaboration between secondary and postsecondary institutions brought about an alignment of competencies that was unprecedented. New partnerships through statewide articulations and transfer agreements are positioning a large number of students to walk into programs with advanced skills and the knowledge to almost guarantee a seat in any Kansas two-year college.

The smooth transition for high school CTE students into a college program has never been easier. "Community colleges play a significant role in the development of a well-trained local workforce, which is the ultimate goal of the legislation," said Terry Calaway, president of Johnson County Community College. "It also strengthens the collaborative mechanisms between the state's K–12 districts and its community college[s], which also benefits the state."

**"Community colleges play a significant role in the development of a well-trained local workforce, which is the ultimate goal of the legislation."**

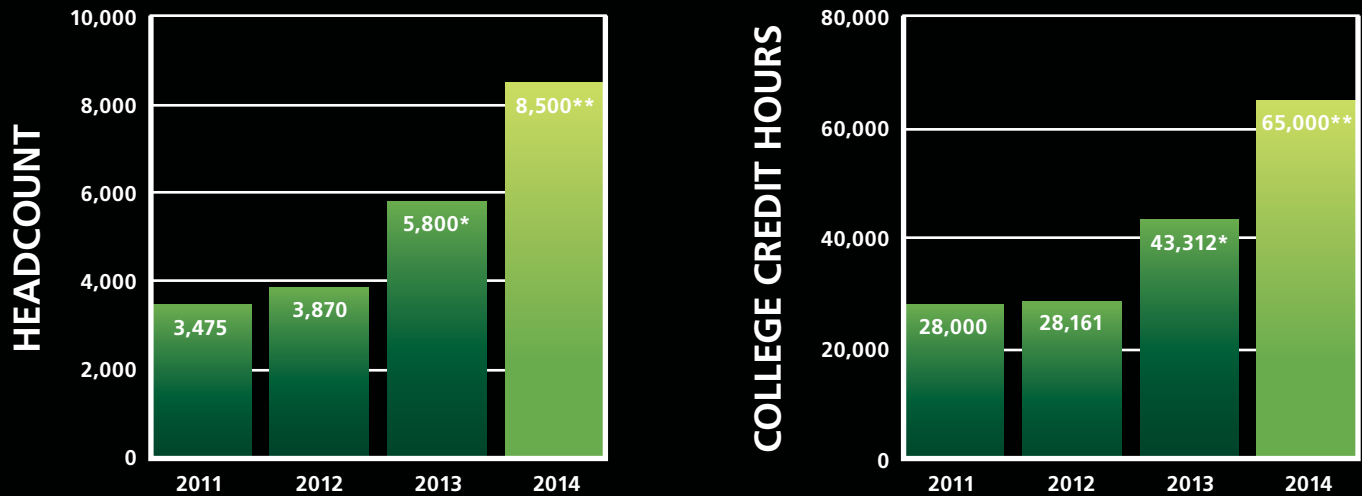
—Terry Calaway, president of Johnson County Community College

Students participating in this initiative have a number of options when selecting CTE course delivery, depending on the agreements between their local school district and the postsecondary institution(s) they choose to partner with. The majority of courses will be offered in their traditional CTE classrooms at the high school or at the college campus by a college faculty member or an approved high school teacher.

To assist in the logistics of offering college courses to CTE students, transportation costs needed to be addressed to make it a viable option for those students within an area of a local college. Approximately \$500,000 was set aside in the appropriations bill to allow local districts to use existing transportation and be reimbursed for mileage by the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE).

But due to the demographics and large distances that some students would have to travel during their normal school day, the traditional classroom is not always the answer and technology often plays a part. Both the school and college must col-

Figure 1: First-year Success Numbers



\*CURRENT ESTIMATE \*\*PROJECTED GROWTH

**By taking college-level CTE courses during their secondary education, students are more likely to enter into a postsecondary program, to complete that program and to pursue an associate or even bachelor’s degree.**

over the previous year (Figure 1). This transitional environment for high school students is an essential component because it offers students an opportunity to succeed and a vision toward a future career.

**Certifications and Credentials**

While the tuition portion of SB155 is an important part in providing the incentives to steer children toward higher education opportunities with careers waiting on the other side, SB155 also rewards school districts with a \$1,000 incentive payment for each student who earns at least one industry-recognized technical certificate in a key occupation.

**Financial Components Included in SB155:**

- Student tuition reimbursement (\$11.75 million)
- \$1,000 incentive to high schools for students earning an industry-recognized credential (\$1.5 million)
- Transportation reimbursement to provide student access to postsecondary programs (\$500,000)
- Marketing to increase student participation in CTE programs (\$50,000)

laborate in offering students current and effective content—or real-world learning simulations—to develop their technical skills needed in the workplace. This hybridized environment will also bring about partnerships with business and industry and/or national organizations to provide the same opportunities as the students in the postsecondary classroom or lab. While these online and hybridized opportunities aren’t currently available for all Kansas students in all CTE pathways at this time, they are increasing in number and are fully supported by both KSDE (K–12 education) and the Kansas Board of Regents (KBOR), which is responsible for postsecondary education.

Both agencies see the influence of SB155 as a starting point for a significant number of students who had not contem-

plated taking college courses and who may be the first in their families to do so. Through this program, all students are able to enter into college-level CTE classes without the full expense, and they gain exposure to the rigorous environment of their selected field. By taking college-level CTE courses during their secondary education, students are more likely to enter into a postsecondary program, to complete that program and to pursue an associate or even bachelor’s degree.

This low-cost option for students and parents to continue the education offered by high schools in CTE pathways into more specialized programs at the postsecondary level has generated a 50 percent headcount increase in secondary students at the postsecondary level, as well as a 54 percent increase in college credit hours

“The value of an industry-recognized certificate cannot be overstated,” Gov. Brownback said. “Our businesses get a well-trained workforce. Graduates will immediately have a marketable skill to begin their career or get a job that will help pay their way through college. And most importantly, students have skill sets that they can rely on for the rest of their lives to support themselves and their families.”

Each year, the Kansas Department of Labor identifies the top occupations in the state of Kansas, based on demand and wages earned. By selecting the high-demand occupations that have an average state wage of 200 percent above the poverty rate, a list is compiled for KSDE, KBOR and partners to identify those occupations that have nationally recognized credentials attainable at the high school level. This list is then finalized and put

into effect for the next four years, allowing any incoming freshman to complete an identified credential before graduation from a Kansas high school. The list is then reviewed annually with the option to phase out and add occupations as the demand changes, but students still have the option to complete credentials from previous lists that were in place during their secondary education.

While this funded list of certifications and credentials are covered under SB155, these are not the only industry-recognized opportunities supported by KSDE and KBOR. Every pathway at the secondary level is required to have at least one certification or credential that can be earned by a student before graduation. These are supported through the state’s CTE funding system and additional general funds by the school district.

The occupations and certifications

identified as those in highest need of additional skilled workers (and that are eligible for the \$1,000 high school incentive) by the Kansas secretary of labor, and in consultation with the KBOR and KSDE, can be found at [www.kansasregents.org/governors\\_cte\\_initiative](http://www.kansasregents.org/governors_cte_initiative).

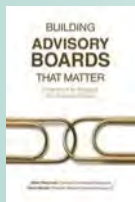
During the 2012–13 school year, 711 (694 public high schools; 17 private high schools) industry-recognized certifications were successfully earned before graduation by high school students in 11 key areas. This was an increase of 26 percent over the 548 credentials earned the previous year, with major areas for secondary student certifications in health (81 percent), manufacturing (8 percent), construction (7 percent) and automotive (3 percent). These certifications and credentials were spread across 108 public school districts and four postsecondary institutions by private secondary students.

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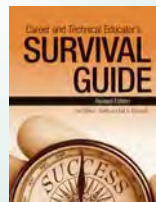
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## CTE Survival Guide

This popular ACTE title was updated in 2010 to include new historical CTE information, more on marketing and evaluating a CTE program, and expanded information on career pathways. This is a great resource for new teachers, those entering the profession from industry, teacher educators and administrators.

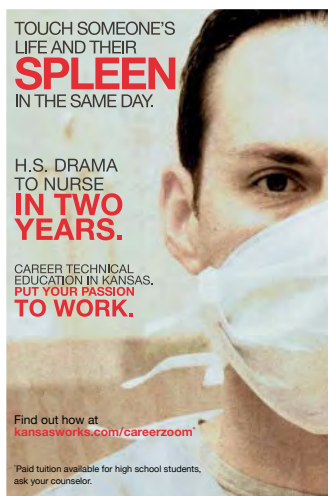
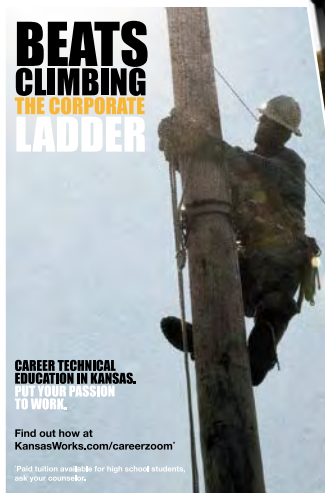
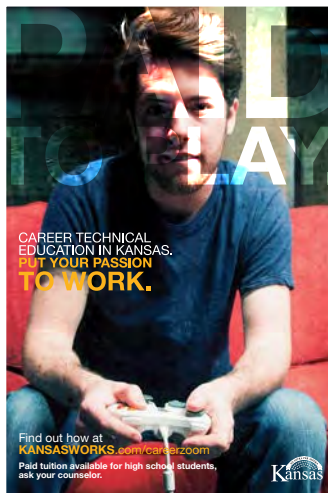
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Promotional materials courtesy of the Kansas Board of Regents

- ▲ This KBOR brochure promotes CTE education and careers.
- ◀ KBOR has provided four promotional posters highlighting Kansas's new CTE initiative.

These posters and brochures were an effective “ice breaker” for not only the students, but also for many CTE teachers, academic teachers, counselors and staff to learn more about what goes on in their schools. While it was the districts that have made the culture shift that is being observed in Kansas, these materials helped to inform, promote and celebrate all that is CTE and the many opportunities that await any student.

The future is full of endless possibilities for high school students, but with the help of good educators and the support of the state, SB155 has made a tangible difference in many young lives. By giving students the opportunity to gain college credits, the door to a wide variety of occupations has been opened, and with industry-recognized credentials, they have the skills to build careers. **I**

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ACTE's CareerTech **VISION 2013** The author will be presenting "Free CTE College Tuition & Certification Funding: KS SB155 at Work" at VISION 2013. For more information, visit [www.careertechvision.com](http://www.careertechvision.com).

## Promotion and Marketing

Some of the biggest challenges for CTE and SB155 have been informing the school districts and students of the opportunities, promoting the legislation and educational funding to parents, and celebrating the benefits and skills that CTE can bring to students—all with a \$50,000 budget.

The key components of the promotion and marketing were the information pertaining to the legislation for districts, updating parents on the free tuition at postsecondary institutions and attracting additional students to CTE pathways and industry credentials. This had to be a cross-agency collaboration involving KSDE, KBOR, workforce centers, the Kansas Departments of Labor and Commerce, and a number of others.

Through low-cost methods of agency communications to the field; a mix of state websites with current information; and consistent clear presentation at all educational conferences, workshops and meetings, the majority of the content was delivered to districts and postsecondary institutions relatively quickly. To assist these educational institutions in disseminating the info to their students, parents and the community, a variety of brochures, posters and promotional videos were produced. Initial packets were sent to every school district in the state free of charge with the option to obtain additional materials upon request. To view the downloadable brochures and posters or to view any of the videos, visit: [www.kansasregents.org/governors\\_cte\\_initiative](http://www.kansasregents.org/governors_cte_initiative).