



KANSAS BOARD OF REGENTS

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

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

January 21, 2009

To the Kansas Congressional Delegation:

On behalf of the Kansas Board of Regents and the state's 32 public higher education institutions (7 public universities, 19 community colleges, and 6 technical colleges), we write to urge your support for the inclusion of funding for vital student financial aid support and important infrastructure projects in the federal economic stimulus package that the Congress will soon consider.

More than 18 million Americans – roughly 6 percent of the nation's population – are currently enrolled in higher education, and, in Kansas, over 64,000 students are enrolled at our state's 32 public higher education institutions. We know from experience that many seek to finish a degree or return to school to acquire new job skills when the economy falters. Thus, enrollments are likely to rise in the coming months. As the federal government acts to bolster our nation's economy, America's higher education institutions can and should be called upon to play a pivotal role in getting us back on the path to recovery and future prosperity.

Even before the current recession, students were borrowing at increasing levels to pursue higher education. Nationwide studies have indicated that two out of every three students who complete a four-year degree have student loans, and their average debt is more than \$22,000. Because need-based financial aid, at both the federal and state levels, has failed to keep pace with rising costs, low-income students face an increasingly heavy debt burden. That is why we urge you to support the inclusion of a Pell Grant increase/general student financial aid component in the emerging economic stimulus package. An increase in student financial aid would provide immediate relief to hard-working students and their families who are struggling to pay tuition and other educational costs during the current economic downturn.

In addition, we urge you to support the inclusion of a higher education infrastructure stimulus package component that would provide funding to undertake "shovel-ready" campus construction projects to repair or renovate academic facilities.

As you may know, the six state universities currently face a maintenance backlog of \$825 million. In addition, the state's municipal university, 19 community colleges, and 6 technical colleges currently face a maintenance backlog of at least \$172 million. The Board has worked with all of the public higher education institutions over the past two weeks to compile a list of potential "shovel-ready" infrastructure projects. Because we currently lack a concrete definition of this term, we established the following parameters to guide our compilation of a project list:

- 1) Projects must be completely designed by February 15. This means that drawings/specifications, purchase requisitions, etc., must be 100% complete and ready to bid.
- 2) Projects must be completely permitted by February 15. This means that all reviews for code compliance, ADA compliance, etc., are approved and complete.
- 3) Projects must be capable of beginning construction within 120 days of fund allocation.
- 4) Projects related to building maintenance, utility and infrastructure improvement, and energy conservation should be given highest priority.

Given these guidelines, the estimated project total for the six state universities is \$364.1 million, and the project total for the municipal university, 19 community colleges, and 6 technical colleges is \$75.6 million, for a system-wide total of \$439.7 million.

In a recent study, the Docking Institute of Public Affairs noted that every \$1 million spent on university deferred maintenance projects generates an economic impact of \$2.2 million in increased economic output of goods and services (gross state product), \$644,500 in increased state earnings, and 19 new jobs created in Kansas. Thus, addressing the \$439.7 million in “shovel-ready” campus infrastructure projects would produce an immediate and profound statewide impact, increasing the economic output of goods and services by \$967.3 million, increasing earnings by \$283.4 million, and creating 8,354 new jobs.

Thank you for your consideration of these critical economic stimulus components. Kansas higher education institutions play a vital role in meeting our state’s economic and workforce development needs, and we stand ready to assist in your efforts to steer our nation towards economic recovery, and to position Kansas for a healthy and prosperous future. Thank you for your continued dedication and work in Washington on behalf of our great state.

Sincerely,



Donna Shank
Chair



Jill Docking
Vice Chair



Reginald L. Robinson
President and CEO

cc: Governor Kathleen Sebelius
Rep. Mike O’Neil, Speaker of the House
Rep. Ray Merrick, House Majority Leader
Rep. Paul Davis, House Minority Leader
Rep. Kevin Yoder, House Appropriations Committee Chair

Rep. Terrie Huntington, House Higher Education Committee Chair
Sen. Steve Morris, President of the Senate
Sen. Derek Schmidt, Senate Majority Leader
Sen. Anthony Hensley, Senate Minority Leader
Sen. Jay Emler, Senate Ways & Means Committee Chair
Sen. Jean Schodorf, Senate Education Committee Chair
Members, Kansas Board of Regents
President Michael Lane, Emporia State University
President Ed Hammond, Fort Hays State University
President Jon Wefald, Kansas State University
President Tom Bryant, Pittsburg State University
Chancellor Robert Hemenway, University of Kansas
President Donald Beggs, Wichita State University
President Jerry Farley, Washburn University
President John Masterson, Allen County Community College
President Carl Heilman, Barton County Community College
President Jacqueline Vietti, Butler County Community College
President Richard Underbakke, Cloud County Community College
President Don Woodburn, Coffeyville Community College
President Lynn Kreider, Colby Community College
President Patrick McAtee, Cowley County Community College
President Richard Burke, Dodge City Community College
President Clayton Tatro, Fort Scott Community College
President Carol Ballantyne, Garden City Community College
President David Reist, Highland Community College
President Ed Berger, Hutchinson Community College
President Daniel Bain, Independence Community College
President Terry Calaway, Johnson County Community College
President Thomas Burke, Kansas City Kansas Community College
President George Knox, Labette Community College
President Vicky Smith, Neosho County Community College
President William Wojciechowski, Pratt Community College
President Duane Dunn, Seward County Community College
President Dean Hollenbeck, Flint Hills Technical College
President Robert Edleston, Manhattan Area Technical College
President Clark Coco, North Central Kansas Technical School
President Kenneth Clouse, Northwest Kansas Technical College
President Duane Custer, Salina Area Technical College
President Peter Gustaf, Wichita Area Technical College