

Op-ed from university presidents

4/27/10

Kansas' prosperity depends on investment in higher education

Kansas colleges and universities have taken more than \$100 million in budget cuts since the start of the state budget crisis.

Instructor layoffs and the elimination of teaching positions have resulted in the elimination of more than 450 academic programs and classes. We've found efficiencies wherever possible, but these cuts have real effects on students and on the businesses that rely on Kansas higher education institutions for educated workers.

But this column isn't about the past, it's about the future.

It's about the future we can create for this state if the Legislature makes the investment in higher education Kansans know is necessary to ensure the long-term prosperity of our state – an investment they are willing to pay for.

Each year our institutions enroll more than 125,000 students. These students come to us because they know the power of higher education to dramatically increase lifetime earnings and open doors to success.

When these students graduate, they go on to work in virtually every industry in Kansas. Kansas businesses rely on us to provide the educated employees they need to prosper. They also rely on us for the new technologies and discoveries that create new industries and enhance our state's quality of life.

If we sustain further cuts, our enrollment capacity and class offerings will continue to be constricted. Students will face limited opportunities and businesses will have to go elsewhere for talented employees. Kansas' long-term prosperity will be threatened.

If Kansas is going to be ready for the economic recovery, we must continue our investment in the education and research that maintains our competitiveness nationally and internationally.

We encourage legislators to make that commitment – even if it requires new revenue – because such an investment will pay lasting dividends for Kansas students, families and businesses.

Sincerely,

Jill Docking, Kansas Board of Regents
Michael Lane, Emporia State University
Ed Hammond, Fort Hays State University
Kirk Schulz, Kansas State University
Steve Scott, Pittsburg State University

Bernadette Gray-Little, University of Kansas

Jerry Farley, Washburn University

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