

MINUTES OF THE SENATE COMMERCE COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Karin Brownlee at 8:30 A.M. on February 25, 2008 in Room 123-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Jean Schodorf- excused
Susan Wagle- excused

Committee staff present:

Jennifer Thierer, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Norm Furse, Revisor of Statutes
Jason Long, Revisor of Statutes
Jackie Lunn, Committee Assistant

Conferees appearing before the committee:

Dr. Ed Berger, President, Hutchinson Community College
Dr. Terry Calaway, President, Johnson County Community College
Joe Glassman, Chairman, Kansas Board of Regents Technical Education Authority
Andy Solter, Kansas Career Pipeline
Stan Ahlerich, President, Kansas, Inc.

Others attending:

See attached list.

To read testimony submitted by conferees go to

<http://skyways.lib.ks.us/government/KansasSenateCommerceCommittee>.

Chairperson Brownlee stated the meeting today is an informal roundtable discussion on workforce development in Kansas and welcomed the special guests, (shown above) asking each to introduce himself. Upon the conclusion of introductions, Chairperson Brownlee started the discussion by asking the following question: "How are each of your institutions connecting with the business needs that our state has?"

Dr. Terry Calaway, President, Johnson County Community College, was the first to answer. Dr. Calaway stated one of the ways Johnson County Community College is connecting is with the Technical Education Advisory Council. The councils are connected with specific program areas and they work with employers who keep them on track and aware of what is happening within their employment community. They are also involved with post graduates and with surveys to help them stay connected to the business employers needs of the state.

Dr. Ed Burger, President, Hutchinson Community College answered next. He stated Hutchinson Community College is basically doing what Johnson County Community College is doing. In the 1980's they were making calls throughout the business community talking to them about the importance of training. Now the business community is coming to them wanting training and wanting to provide that training. He went on to say that there is a workforce shortage in his area. Hutchinson Community College had a manufacturing summit in late January in an effort to find what the manufacturing needs are in the surrounding counties. During that summit, it was determined that the biggest need was to integrate the high school graduate not going on to a four year school into the workforce.

Andy Salter, Kansas Career Papering, answered next. He stated the Kansas Career Pipeline has several components and one is working with secondary institutions and students. They are also beginning to form partnerships with the business communities.

Joe Gasman, Chairman, Kansas Board of Regents Technical Education Authority, answered next. He stated from the state authority aspect they do not get as involved as the community colleges. They are currently assessing the needs of the local areas setting goals and objectives to meet their needs. The process of the two highly respected colleges which are here today, serve as models. Mr. Gasman stated technical education has a new vibrancy throughout Kansas and the United States. The Technical Education Authority is looking to the community colleges to find out how they access business and economy in their areas and how well their

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advisory groups professionally report. They are also trying to get business and industry involved feeling if they do it will raise the standards of excellence. Mr. Gasman believes they need to have an extensive study so they will know what they are dealing with before they can try to solve the problem. They are trying to get more input from business owners which will allow them to do strategic planning.

Chairperson Brownlee called on Stan Aldrich, President, Kansas, Inc. asking about the strategic studies Kansas, Inc. has done. Mr. Aldrich stated they had probably done fifteen studies in this area working with several groups across the state and found that businesses are ready and willing to go the extra mile.

Mr. Gasman answered by saying there is a lot of information out there and they have realized it will take a coordinated effort and to do so have asked the Department of Commerce and the Department of Labor to start fulfilling a report status. They also plan to utilize Kansas, Inc.

Dr. Calaway joined the discussion stating several things are happening because of the efforts of the Board of Regents Technical Education Authority's work. Dr. Calaway also stated that it is not just getting the high school graduate into the workforce but there are a number of folks, as technology has changed, that need retraining. There is a need to build a system that connects all across the state and some progress has been made in that direction but it has been slow.

Dr. Berger joined the discussion stating one of the causes of the workforce shortage is there are more companies that have had to introduce technology to be competitive which requires them to require a better trained workforce.

Mr. Aldrich entered the discussion stating there are good things that are happening and all the pieces are in place, but the connectivity is missing. Mr. Aldrich referred the Committee to the Alabama model. Mr. Aldrich presented written copy ([Attachment 1](#)) which can be found in its entirety on the link shown on page 1 of these minutes. He stated the Alabama system has a central agency which assigns a project coordinator for each company committing to locate in Alabama. The Coordinator assesses the needs of the business relating to workforce development and act accordingly to meet these needs.

The discussion continued with Committee members entering. The discussion moved to the secondary and post secondary schools and if they are coordinating efforts in the direction of workforce development. Mr. Gasman noted that changes are coming. There is a communication barrier and it has been difficult to obtain the data needed for them to make intelligent decisions regarding workforce development in the state. He stated that the sharing of information with the Technical Education Authority is a problem and they may need help breaking down the walls of communication barriers. The mind set of technical training needs to change. He stated the K-12 education system through the post secondary education is coming on board and beginning to support technical education. Mr. Gasman stated they need to have the future forecast from the businesses in order to address the workforce development needs for now and in the future. He stated that 85,000 high tech jobs will be needed in the aircraft industry by the year 2020.

Mr. Caraway entered the discussion and stated they need to identify the largest training needs of businesses in Kansas; they need to know how to deal with changes in the industry that cause customized workforce development training. There is a need to do marketing throughout the state regarding the kinds of technical occupations that will be available in the future. They need to find a way to have connectivity so they can provide the best workforce in the state. He added that one of the biggest issues is how to get to the parents and change their mind set regarding technical training and changes also need to be made in the K-12 school system involving the availability and need for technical education.

Chairperson Brownlee thanked the special guests and stated if they wanted to submit written comments to the Committee they could. Mr. Gasman stated he would have written summation in two weeks.

Chairperson Brownlee adjourned the meeting with the next meeting scheduled for March 26, 2008, at 8:15 a.m. in room 123 S.