

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE VISION 2020 COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Tom Sloan at 3:30 p.m. on February 7, 2011, in Room 144-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Representative Mike Peterson- excused
Representative Vern Swanson- excused

Committee staff present:

Doug Taylor, Office of the Revisor of Statutes
Sean Ostrow, Office of the Revisor of Statutes
Corey Carnahan, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Jay Hall, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Mary Koles, Committee Assistant

Conferees appearing before the Committee:

Pat George, Kansas Department of Commerce

Others attending:

See attached list.

Chairman Sloan called for bill introductions. Representative Bill Otto moved to allow a bill introduction to sell bonds to raise funds for the Kansas Bioscience Authority. The motion was seconded and passed.

Chairman Sloan welcomed and presented Secretary Pat George, Department of Commerce, to the committee. Secretary George addressed issues confronting our educational system and legislature to ensure that Kansas is well positioned to attract new businesses and provide good employment opportunities for our citizens.

He reported that by 2018 over 60 percent of the jobs will require higher skills and credentials at a postsecondary level. Educational institutions and state government must support the common goal of providing an expanding pool of highly skilled, industry-endorsed/credentialed Kansans to serve a growing economy. Simultaneously, the Department of Commerce needs an improved procedure for documenting the supply side of education and training to prove to potential new businesses that we can provide them with a skilled, qualified workforce. This will, George said, require flexibility from our colleges and they will need additional resources; flexibility will serve our businesses well and support job growth. Furthermore, he maintained, our K-12 educational system needs to address marketable skills to meet the competitive requirements of the 21st Century global marketplace.

Secretary George also commented on the Kansas Centers of Excellence and the Governor's recommendation that oversight of the centers be transferred from KTEC to the Department of Commerce. He noted that Commerce is committed to supporting these institutions and their goals. Throughout his remarks, Secretary George was optimistic about the future, near and distant, of business growth in Kansas. (Attachment 1)

Comments, discussions and questions followed Secretary George's presentation. Participants included Chairman Sloan and Representatives Gail Finney, Don Hineman, Barbara Bollier, Don Hill, and Ron Worley.

The next meeting is scheduled for February 9, 2011.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:55 p.m.

Guest List

House Vision 2020 Committee

Wednesday, February 7, 2011

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**Testimony to
The House Standing Committee on Vision 2020
by Secretary Pat George
Kansas Department of Commerce
February 7, 2011**

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the higher education system and how I believe the legislature can assist Kansas businesses with a robust, business-focused educational system. First off, I would like to applaud the House Standing Committee on Vision 2020 for exploring issues that face our educational system to ensure that Kansas is well positioned in the next decade and beyond to attract new business and have ample employment opportunities for our citizens.

A few areas that I think are important to address with you today are as follows: 1) How higher education in our state can tailor programs that are in concert with businesses' workforce needs; 2) ensuring that college and technical training programs are serving the needs of Kansas' students and our state's future workers; and 3) I will briefly touch on some the anticipated changes to the Department of Commerce including new oversight of the Centers of Excellence. These Centers of Excellence are university-based research programs designed to ensure our state is attractive to new and expanding companies in Kansas strengthen the markets where we are most competitive. Finally, I am happy to provide some thoughts on Kansas Inc.'s report on Vision 2020.

1) A Business-focused Higher Education System

The goals of the educational system and business, in my view, must always be aligned with the best interests of the student and future job seeker. By better serving the student with high skills in

demand by industry, we are also better serving our Kansas employers. How those interests are determined start with an understanding of the business community requirements for employee skills and competencies and the projected increases in skill levels and expertise in the future. Our universities and community/technical colleges training our future workforce need to be able to adapt, and have current information from employers available to them to refine and update their programs to enable their students to be marketable to Kansas companies.

In my own experience as an entrepreneur and business owner, I have sent my employees for education and training updates. I need their expertise to adapt and evolve to stay current with my business needs in order to remain competitive. It is my belief that both the student and the employer will be better served when our institutions of higher learning are more flexible, nimble and responsive to the changing dynamics of industry. The path to achieving this begins with open lines of communication between colleges and the private sector; university and college faculty who are receptive to learning how business has changed and the increased skill requirements employers have for future employees. We know the job requirements for Kansas in 2018 – over 60% of the jobs will require higher skills and credentials at a postsecondary level. We want our colleges to be ready to prepare this workforce and we recognize their important role in promoting job growth and economic prosperity. Our higher education institutions and state government must be supportive of the common goal – an expanding pool of Kansans with the high skills needed to serve a growing economy.

2) Serving the needs of students

A key aspect of a student's marketability in the hiring process is the possession of certain industry-endorsed credentials certifying one's competency in a particular skill set. These credentials that add value to the employer will provide a competitive advantage for the job candidate. We acknowledge

the important role our community and technical colleges fulfill in training and certifying these students. While these institutions have been doing a fine job in teaching technical skills, I believe what requires more attention is the credential/certification process itself. We need to ensure an industry-endorsed standard is in place so employers are assured all graduates possess a standard, minimum skill level to meet their requirements. Currently, the requirements to achieve a technical certificate at one college may not equal the outcomes required at another, therefore placing a particular student at a disadvantage and further confusing an employer's hiring process due to lack of consistent standards. Business owners I know are eager to invest in the continued training of their employees but they do want to know what skills they are getting when they hire a new technical graduate. I would like to applaud our colleges who have been early adopters of national credentials including those provided by the National Center for Construction Education and Research, the American Welding Society, the National Institute of Metalworking Skills, and others.

A related need for our recruiters at Commerce is an improved procedure for documenting the supply side of education and training. Companies and site selectors want to know, for example, how many welders, how many engineers, or how many workers with National Institute for Metalworking Skills (NIMS) credentials did your college system produce last year. In other words, how can you prove you can provide my company, should we locate here, with a skilled, qualified workforce? The next question is, "How many machinists could you train if we must ramp up with 400 new employees over 6 months?" or "If we add a new process in composite manufacturing, how long will it take for the college to train our employees with the new technology?" I know this flexibility from our colleges requires some resources but this is the type of flexibility that will serve our business community well and support job growth.

These are examples of how increased communication between business and educators is critical to the success of our workforce preparation and promotes a competitive advantage for Kansas. We must assure our Kansas job seekers have been adequately prepared by our higher education system.

I also submit to the committee our K-12 education system plays an important role in preparing our future workforce for employment. More needs to be done to address marketable skills at these early stages in order to sufficiently prepare students for life outside of the classroom. If we don't begin the process until postsecondary education, our workforce will not meet the competitive requirements of the 21st Century global marketplace.

3) Kansas Centers of Excellence and the Department of Commerce

The Governor has recommended in the FY 2012 budget to transfer oversight of the five Centers of Excellence from KTEC to the Department of Commerce. I think it is important for this committee to understand the mission of these centers, and convey that the Department of Commerce is committed to supporting these institutions and their goals. The contributions of these centers are critical to the state's business growth and vitality and Commerce, as the lead economic development agency for the state, is well-positioned to provide this support and oversight.

University Centers of Excellence. These include:

- National Institute for Aviation Research (NIAR) at Wichita State University. Supports the Kansas Aviation/Aerospace industry through research, product development, training, and testing.
- Advanced Manufacturing Institute (AMI) at Kansas State University. Supports small companies, entrepreneurs, and researchers in the development and delivery of new products and technologies. Services include engineering and product design assistance; process improvement and technology improvement and commercialization.
- Information in Health Communication Technology Center (ITTC) at the University of Kansas. Advances knowledge and innovation in the areas of computing, sensors, and communication.

- Kansas Polymer Research Center (KPRC) at Pittsburg State University Sports Technology and Product Development in Polymers Plastics and Wood. Provides technical assistance in research facilities for the design, development, and testing of prototypes, products and processing methods.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss Vision 2020 and what I believe are important issues to address from the Kansas Department of Commerce's perspective with regard to the education system. I am happy to stand for any questions.