



March 10, 2023

Senator Rick Billinger
 PO Box 594
 Goodland, KS 67735
 Capital Phone 785-296-7399

Dear Senator Billinger,

As the Vice President of Hess Services Inc. based in Hays Kansas, I am writing in strong support of the proposed Affiliation between Fort Hays State University (FHSU), North Central Kansas Technical College (NCK-Tech), and Northwest Kansas Technical College’s programs.

Hess Services Inc. is one of the region’s largest private employers with 297 current employees. We are a diverse company with manufacturing and service departments that make tanks, oilfield production equipment, buildings, water filtration equipment, fiberglass components, and offer heavy construction, crane, and transportation services. Hess Services Inc. relies heavily on regional technical colleges for employee candidates to fill our roles. We believe that a diverse manufacturing sector is healthy for regional retention of our workforce. Hess Services has employed as many as 490 employees. However, we saw our workforce shrink to 300 employees over the last several years. We have aggressively hired in region and below is a snapshot of our immediate labor needs.

Hiring Matrix

WSB	-1	Maintenance	-2	Fiber Glass	-2	Cranes	-1	current staff count	282	current staff count with contract welders
Vessel	-5	Machine Shop	0	WPP Sheds	-5	Inventory/ Proc/Planning	-1	desired staff count	324	desired staff count
Steel Tank	6	Rigs	0	Blast/Paint	-2	HR	0	delta	42	delta
Heavy Const	-6	Walkways	-1	Engineering	-3	Admin	0	delta %	13%	delta %
Ready Mix	0	Quality	-2	Plasma	-1	Logistics	-4			
Contract Welders	0					Parts	0			

For over 50 years, Northwest Kansas Technical College has answered the workforce development needs of its 17-county service area in northwestern Kansas. Nearly all of Northwest Tech’s programs have a job placement rate above 95% immediately following graduation, and it is in the top 2% in graduate success rate out of all 899 public 2-year colleges in the nation.

North Central Kansas Technical College (NCK-Tech) has prepared over 22,000 members of the Kansas workforce since 1964. With campuses in Beloit and Hays, NCK-Tech serves 18 counties in north central and northwest Kansas. NCK-Tech generates over \$31M in economic impact, annually, employs over 100 people in the region, and consistently ranks as one of the top 2-year colleges in the nation. Training students in skills necessary to be employed by area businesses, over 90% of NCK-Tech’s graduates stay in Kansas, most in the region. In recognition of these

facts for NCK-Tech and Northwest Tech's workforce development leadership, Affiliation is the recommended and supported course of action.

Affiliation with FHSU addresses needs on staffing positions for teaching and helps to provide academic solutions to students in western Kansas. The new affiliation initiative will address demographic and economic challenges by developing academic programs and integrated student services, remove unnecessary bureaucratic barriers to student success and create a coalition with regional businesses and industries. This will in turn increase opportunities for students while meeting workforce development needs in rural Kansas. We believe affiliation will reduce operating expenses for the regional institutions and help lessen the tax burden on the state.

Regional collaboration on efforts to meet the needs of students and increasing program articulations will be beneficial. A regional goal of keeping graduates in the northwest Kansas geographic area will aid in the growth and success of the business and industry sector as well as have a positive impact of economic development in the regional communities. Improved articulation on classes for 2-year students deciding to pursue a 4 year degree will be beneficial to all institutions involved as well as the region and provide the framework for students to achieve this goal. The business and industry sector for the region will reap the benefits by acquiring a larger employee candidate pool with tailored talents and skills.

An immediate outcome of the increased communication through collaborative discussions regarding affiliations is the plan to offer summer internships to NWTech Students, at Hess Services in Hays KS. FHSU has extended offer to house students this summer in dormitories through collaborative efforts with NWTech.

We fully support the proposed Affiliation between Fort Hays State University (FHSU), North Central Kansas Technical College (NCK-Tech), and Northwest Kansas Technical College's programs. We at Hess Services, Inc. want to ensure alignment between private sector workforce needs and the development of a leading-edge affiliation among northwest Kansas institutions.

Sincerely,



Mark Hess

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