

Testimony before Senate Education Committee

SB 44 Promise Scholarship Act Eligibility

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In-person testimony in SUPPORT

Good afternoon, Chair Erickson, Vice Chair Thomas, and Members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear today and advocate for our students.

We are the Promise Act; our students are the Promise Act.

The Need

Kansas has rebounded from the COVID-19 pandemic, and its economic growth has been significantly higher than the national average. The state's 2024 employment forecasts project growth in several of the vocational and healthcare areas in which we prepare students for jobs in those fields (see (<https://www.cedbr.org/forecast-blog>)). Trade programs, unlike other areas of higher education, are in hot demand. The need for skilled vocational workers in Kansas applies equally to programs available at public institutions and those offered at WTI since we both offer relevant and in-demand training designed to meet these needs.

According to the [2024 Kansas Economic Report](#), "*Kansas continues to show strength across multiple economic indicators, from low unemployment to resilient export activity. The state faces significant challenges in sustaining future labor force growth due to demographic trends, particularly among younger populations. As Kansas moves forward, careful attention will be needed to ensure its economic momentum is maintained amid shifting workforce dynamics and changing global trade conditions.*" (Secretary of Labor Amber Schultz)

History

- Wichita Technical Institute was established in 1954, which makes us the oldest technical school in the Wichita area.
- Over the last 70 years, we have grown to offer six high-demand technical and healthcare programs: 1) Electronics Systems Technology, 2) Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Technology, 3) Computer Technology and Network Administration, 4) Medical Assistant, 5) Medical Insurance and Coding, and 6) Pharmacy Technician.
- All these programs qualify as approved areas of training under the current Promise Act.

Who we serve.

We serve established Kansans. Individuals that have grown up in this state, started families here, have roots here, own businesses here. Our typical student ranges from 27-45 years of age. Whether they are attending college for the first time or returning to school after a layoff or career change, we are here to get them into the workforce.

Financial Aid

Educational funding is available for those who qualify. Students can apply for Title IV financial aid consisting of loans and Pell grants, state and federal grants through KANSASWORKS, military veteran benefits as well as scholarships and company tuition reimbursements. Students must apply for this funding by completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and any other applications related to specific grants and other sources of financial assistance.

What makes us successful?

Here at WTI, we are all about our students' success. From the first phone call with admissions, until they walk across the stage at graduation, we are here to support them. Through weekly retention meetings, on-site tutoring, daily phone calls to absent students, and lifelong career services assistance, we make it hard for our students to fail in school and in the job market.

Worried that no one is making sure we are doing what we say we are? Don't be!

- WTI is accredited by the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges (ACCSC) and is approved by both the U.S. Department of Education and the Kansas Board of Regents. We have a long and very good working relationship with the Kansas Board of Regents.
- We're also approved to provide training by Veteran Affairs, Kansas Works, and state/local employers.
- WTI must meet stringent student graduation and training-related employment requirements. Our outcomes are verified by independent third-party audits. The school also undergoes annual on-site evaluations to ensure compliance with our accrediting standards.

Educational Delivery

WTI takes a collaborative approach to training. All our instructors have real-world experience, worked in the field they teach and are familiar with industry expectations, and impart that knowledge to students. Most of our students have jobs so classes are designed to accommodate their work schedules by meeting Mondays through Thursdays either from 8:00 am to 12:50 pm or 5:40 pm to 10:30 pm. Training is offered through a blended learning environment in a combination of 10 hours on campus and 10 hours online which provides an optimal balance of hands-on activity and convenience. Students also participate in experiential and internship programs with local industries and healthcare providers.

How We Maximize Employability

- Students Earn In-Demand Certifications and Credentials: Certifications and credentials allow them to enter the workforce more rapidly. Studies show that individuals with certificates and credentials often earn wages comparable to those with traditional degrees.
- Our Internship Programs: Provide valuable job-related experience. This gives students a leg-up on jobs by allowing potential employers an opportunity to preview potential hires.
- Our Training Partnerships, Customized Training, and National Training programs provide positive exposure to how we do things and help reinforce the qualifications of our graduates.
- We Provide Relevant Career Services which continue free-of-charge throughout the graduates' work life.

WTI's Proven Track Record

- KS public Community Colleges and Technical Colleges measure their performance by graduation rates, credentials earned, and success of their graduates in the workforce, and **so does WTI**.
- WTI consistently achieves graduation rates in excess of those figures and had an **average graduation rate of 62% in 2024**.
- WTI also must meet employment outcomes and report how many graduates get jobs. These jobs must be verified by the employer by filling out an employment verification form. Public 2 and 4-year post-secondary colleges and universities do not, but government statistics suggest that about 55% of their students get jobs upon graduation. WTI's audited outcomes confirmed an **average job placement rate of 78%** upon graduation in 2024.
- Our certificate programs are also shorter, 15 months or less. This means our graduates join the workforce sooner, earn wages sooner, and become contributors to the Kansas economy much sooner than traditional college graduates.

- Over the last 16 years, WTI has placed roughly **4,000** students into the Kansas workforce. Approximately 95% of them chose to remain in Kansas and are earning competitive wages.

Our Students Deserve the Same Opportunities as Other Kansas Students

- **This is not about us - it's about our students.**
- We also feel that growing the Kansas economy is essential. As stated previously, approximately 95% of our graduates continue to live in, work in, and contribute to the Kansas economy.
- We need to change our viewpoint on funding our students, not the school. Our students deserve the same opportunities to go through training, enter the workforce, and improve our economy debt-free as other Kansas students have under the Promise Act.