



KANSAS BOARD OF REGENTS

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BOARD ASKS STATE'S CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION TO SUPPORT STIMULUS PACKAGE

Federal Economic Stimulus Package Would Assist Students and Campuses

(TOPEKA) – Yesterday the Kansas Board of Regents contacted the six members of the state's Congressional delegation to urge them to support the inclusion of funding for student financial aid support and campus infrastructure projects in the federal economic stimulus package. The letter, written on behalf of the state's 32 public higher education institutions, was sent to United States Senators Sam Brownback and Pat Roberts, United States Congresswoman Lynn Jenkins, and United States Congressmen Dennis Moore, Jerry Moran, and Todd Tiahrt.

“As the federal government acts to bolster our nation's economy, our public higher education institutions can and should be called upon to play a pivotal role in getting us back on the path to recovery and future prosperity,” said Donna Shank of Liberal, Chair of the Kansas Board of Regents.

Over 64,000 students are currently enrolled at the state's public higher education institutions, and enrollments are likely to rise in the coming months as individuals return to school to acquire new job skills as a result of the economic downturn. Because need-based financial aid, at both the federal and state levels, has failed to keep pace with rising costs, low-income students face an increasingly heavy debt burden. That is why the Board asked the Kansas Congressional delegation to support the inclusion of a Pell Grant increase/general student financial aid component in the economic stimulus package.

“Many individuals seek to finish a degree or return to school to acquire new job skills when the economy falters,” added Shank. “An increase in student financial aid would provide immediate relief to hard-working students and their families who are struggling to pay tuition and other educational costs during the current economic downturn.”

In addition, the Board asked the Kansas Congressional delegation to support the inclusion of a higher education infrastructure component which would provide funding to undertake “shovel-ready” campus construction projects to repair or renovate academic facilities, thus creating new jobs statewide.

The six state universities currently face a maintenance backlog of \$825 million. In addition, the state's municipal university, 19 community colleges, and 6 technical colleges currently face a

maintenance backlog of at least \$172 million. Working closely with the state’s public higher education institutions, the Board recently compiled a list of potential “shovel-ready” infrastructure projects that could begin almost immediately. The Board was able to identify \$364.1 million in state university projects, and \$75.6 million in projects on the campuses of the municipal university, 19 community colleges, and 6 technical colleges, for a system-wide total of \$439.7 million. According to a recent study, these projects, if completely addressed, would create 8,354 new jobs in Kansas.

“Kansas higher education institutions play a vital role in meeting our state’s economic and workforce development needs,” said Shank. “If funded, these important stimulus components would position Kansas for a healthy and prosperous future.”

The Board’s letter to the Kansas Congressional delegation and the “shovel-ready” project list can be found on the Board’s website at the following link: www.kansasregents.org.

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About the Kansas Board of Regents:

The nine-member Kansas Board of Regents is the governing board of the state’s six universities and the statewide coordinating board for the state’s 32 public higher education institutions (six state universities, a municipal university, nineteen community colleges, and six technical colleges). In addition, the Board administers the state’s student financial aid, adult education, GED, and career and technical education programs. The Board also authorizes private proprietary schools and out-of-state institutions to operate in Kansas, and administers the Kan-ed network, a statewide network that provides broadband Internet access and distance learning capabilities for schools, hospitals, and libraries.

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