

**KANSAS POSTSECONDARY
TECHNICAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY**
MINUTES
August 21, 2025

MEMBERS PRESENT:

David Reist (Chair)
Curtis Sneden (Vice Chair)
Ray Frederick, Jr.
Dr. Tiffany Anderson
Mike Beene
Natalie Clark
Cindy Hoover
Keith Humphrey
Debra Mikulka
Amber Shultz (via Zoom)
Todd Zimmer (via Zoom)

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Reist called the August 21, 2025, meeting of the Kansas Postsecondary Technical Education Authority to order at 10:00 am.

WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS FROM PRESIDENT & CEO

President & CEO Blake Flanders expressed deep appreciation to the members of the Technical Education Authority (TEA) for their dedication and the impactful programs they've developed. He emphasized the unprecedented support for career and technical education and encouraged the TEA to remain proactive in shaping the future of Kansas' workforce. Despite potential budget constraints, he urged members to focus on strategic investments which continue to move the Kansas economy forward, such as high-demand, high-wage programs. President Flanders highlighted the TEA's statutory responsibilities, including reviewing existing programs, proposing new ones, and establishing benchmarks for funding decisions. He concluded by reaffirming the importance of the TEA's role in advancing technical education and wished everyone a successful academic year.

II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Member Sneden moved to approve the minutes for the May 29, 2025, meeting. Member Mikulka seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

III. INTRODUCTIONS & REPORTS

A. INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Reist began by introducing President Greg Nichols from Salina Area Technical College, representing the technical colleges, and President Amber Knoettgen from Cloud County Community College, representing the community colleges. Both will serve a two-year term. He also noted the presence of many new faces on the updated list of presidents for the community and technical colleges and encouraged introductions whenever they attend a meeting.

B. REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

Chair Reist began by recognizing Ray Frederick for his years of service as Chair of the TEA, expressing gratitude for his dedication to technical education and two-year colleges in Kansas. He also shared his enthusiasm for the upcoming academic year and his opportunity to serve, extending appreciation to all members for their continued commitment to technical education, two-year colleges, and workforce development across the state. He then proceeded to review the member assignments for the Budget and Finance Committee and the Program and Curriculum Committee, recommending that the current assignments remain unchanged.

C. REPORT FROM TEA MEMBERS

Member Clark reported that the Kansas State Department of Education has been actively working to develop a Kansas-specific cluster pathway model, using the modernized national career cluster framework as a foundation and aligning it with labor market needs. The initiative included input from focus groups and collaboration with the Department of Commerce, Department of Labor, the Board of Regents, and guidance from Advanced CTE. The resulting 2627 Cluster Model Handbook has been published, and efforts will continue in the coming months to implement the transition plan.

Member Beene shared recent experiences visiting Textron, Wichita school districts' Future Ready Centers, Pacific Aviation, and WSU Tech. He expressed appreciation for the strong business partnerships supporting both the school district and WSU Tech, particularly highlighting Textron's engagement. He recounted meeting a student who completed Future Ready classes, interned with Textron, and is set to begin full-time employment with the company upon graduating high school in December, with a starting compensation package of approximately \$68,000 annually. Beene reflected on the significance of such opportunities for young people.

He also acknowledged the recent influx of projects and proposals within the agency, thanking the colleges that provided support and letters of endorsement. He emphasized that Kansas's strong educational partnerships are a key asset in attracting and retaining businesses and extended his gratitude to all community partners for their continued collaboration.

Member Anderson highlighted a collaborative initiative between the Kansas Department of Education and Washburn Tech at TCALC, emphasizing the launch of a groundbreaking teacher pathway program. This pilot program, the first of its kind in Kansas, enables 20 high school students to simultaneously earn their high school diplomas, associate degrees, and credentials through TCALC. Participants are paid while pursuing careers in education, including teaching, school psychology, and social work. Member Clark added that the students signed formal commitments in a celebratory event attended by their families and Commissioner Watson. The program is part of the Youth Registered Apprenticeship initiative and reflects a strong commitment to workforce development in education.

Member Anderson also shared plans to expand this model beyond education. In a conversation with Dean Smathers, he proposed offering similar early employment agreements to students pursuing careers in HVAC, electrical work, and maintenance. The district will soon launch a program allowing students to interview and sign commitment agreements for future employment in these fields, contingent on position availability and program completion. Students may also participate in paid internships while still in school. Anderson emphasized the importance of offering hope and opportunity early, noting that such efforts have successfully led students to return and work within the district.

Member Sneden shared insights from a recent Field Day event in Seneca focused on advancing drone technology. Although not directly tied to partner schools, he emphasized its relevance to workforce development and education. The event featured participation from 38 states and 12 countries, with strong representation from the Kansas Department of Commerce. Member Sneden noted the rapid evolution and wide-ranging applications of drone technology, particularly in agriculture and healthcare.

He highlighted the importance of preparing students for emerging opportunities in this sector, as the technology becomes more commercialized and normalized. The event reinforced the need for educational institutions to stay ahead of the curve and equip young people with the skills to thrive in this fast-growing field.

Member Mikulka shared her experience attending Washburn Tech's back-to-school event for faculty and staff, describing it as a positive and energizing day filled with meaningful conversations and a shared meal. She reflected on the enduring impact of such gatherings, noting that even after decades in education, these moments

serve as powerful reminders of the importance and purpose of the work being done. Mikulka emphasized that the dedication of educators and staff across institutions truly makes a difference, and events like this reinforce the value of their efforts.

Chair Reist shared an observation from a recent drive between Highland and Hiawatha, noting the evolving use of technology in agriculture. He saw a helicopter and a traditional airplane spraying cornfields, followed by three drones simultaneously spraying a field, operated by a technician from a pickup truck. Chair Reist recognized the operator as a graduate of the Baileyville campus in precision agriculture, now running his own drone spraying business. He remarked on the efficiency and growing prevalence of drone technology in agriculture, highlighting its potential to surpass traditional methods. The experience underscored the rapid advancement and practical application of drone technology in rural Kansas.

D. REPORT FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Vice President April White provided several important updates. She noted that all members received an updated President's List, which includes many new faces, and encouraged members to familiarize themselves with the individuals and their contact information. She also extended an invitation to the Board of Regents' 100th anniversary celebration, scheduled for September 17, and welcomed all members to attend. Over the summer, the Adult Education team remained active. With the release of previously frozen federal funds, the team has been working on the state's application for the Ability to Benefit provision, which would allow students—particularly those in the A-OK program who have not completed high school—to qualify for federal financial aid. Additionally, GED Math and English scores will soon be included in guidance for community and technical colleges, allowing them to be used as placement indicators for entry-level English and math courses. A new adult education system was also launched on August 15 and is currently being implemented.

Vice President White also reported that the Perkins team has been busy closing out end-of-year grants and issuing new awards to eligible institutions. She announced that a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a Perkins Reserve Grant will be released on August 25, with approximately \$900,000 available to support student success and address industry needs. Colleges were encouraged to begin preparing their applications. In workforce development, Director Chambers provided training over the summer on how to write new program proposals. The team has also been working closely with the Department of Commerce on apprenticeship initiatives, strengthening articulated credit agreements with K–12 partners, and participating in the KACTE conference.

E. REPORT FROM THE COMMUNITY COLLEGES

President Knoettgen, now in her sixth year as president of Cloud County Community College and formerly its CFO, expressed her honor in representing Kansas's 19 community colleges. She acknowledged the legacy of her predecessor, President Seth Carter, and emphasized the importance of continuing to advocate for the sector. Knoettgen thanked Vice President White and the KBOR staff for their responsiveness and support, particularly during the challenging process of completing the KSPSD report, which involves extensive data validation and corrections. She noted that presidents are required to certify this data by September 9 and expressed appreciation for the staff's efforts, including online trainings and technical assistance.

Drawing from discussions at the annual KBOR retreat, President Knoettgen stressed the need for community colleges to improve how they tell their story—both legislatively and within their own institutions. She shared key data points that highlight the impact of community colleges in Kansas: in Academic Year 2024, community colleges enrolled 91,220 students, representing 42% of all students in Kansas higher education. Combined with technical colleges, that figure rises to 50%. In terms of full-time equivalent (FTE), community colleges accounted for 39,300 students, or 31%, and 38% when combined with technical colleges. Community colleges also awarded 15,719 credentials—35% of all credentials in the state, and 46% when including technical colleges. The largest growth area was in Certificate A credentials, particularly in fields like agriculture, which align with the goals of Excel in CTE and the development of stackable credentials.

President Knoettgen also referenced a 2023 economic impact study showing that one in eighteen jobs in Kansas is supported by community college activity, contributing \$6.7 billion in added income and supporting 106,000 jobs. She noted the intention to repeat this study every five years. To further illustrate the sector's contributions, she highlighted recent press releases from several institutions: Barton and Hutchinson Community Colleges' partnership in a respiratory therapy program; a rural health scholars pipeline to Kansas City University; Colby Community College's Commitment Scholarship; Hutchinson Community College's FRAME grant to address housing needs; Independence Community College's \$300,000 grant for student technology access; Kansas City Kansas Community College's beam-raising ceremony for its new education and wellness center; and Seward and Garden City Community Colleges' MOU for a joint medical assistant program.

F. REPORT FROM THE TECHNICAL COLLEGES

President Greg Nichols began by commending President Knoettgen for effectively highlighting the value and impact of Kansas's community colleges, noting that the same principles apply to the state's technical colleges. He emphasized the collective importance of both sectors—not only in terms of student outcomes and credentialing, but also in their contributions to local communities and job creation. President Nichols explained that his institution aligns its reporting with the Kansas Board of Regents' strategic goals, focusing on key achievements rather than attempting to address every goal in each monthly report. He stressed that community and technical colleges together account for 50% of Kansas's higher education enrollment, a fact that is often underappreciated across the state.

President Nichols then shared several institutional highlights from across the technical college sector. Flint Hills Technical College received support from the Patterson Family Foundation to enhance its commercial truck driving program and earned ASE Master Automotive Service Technology accreditation through 2030. Its nursing program also received a five-year approval from the Kansas Board of Nursing. Manhattan Area Technical College (MATC) is working with 15 local employers to provide tuition and fee support. It has expanded its CNA training capacity from 130 to 270 seats in partnership with healthcare providers and regional schools. MATC also launched a mobile virtual reality lab for K–12 outreach and reported that 95% of its faculty record classroom and lab presentations to support student learning. The college introduced a new plumbing technology program and reported full cohorts in both its associate degree and practical nursing programs. Additionally, 90% of MATC programs have added options for internships, on-the-job training, and accelerated pathways.

Fort Hays North Central Technical College received funding from the Dane G. Hansen Foundation to support its new Construction Innovation Center, which will expand access to high-demand training in construction, electrical, plumbing, HVAC, and commercial driving. Welding student Navarre Plagmann from Beloit earned national recognition by winning the Project MFG National Welding League Championship. At Salina Tech, the focus has been on the upcoming ribbon-cutting ceremony for its new \$6 million Industrial Maintenance and Automation building, supported by philanthropic, local, state, and federal resources. Washburn Tech hosted multiple scholarship fundraising events to reduce financial barriers for families and welcomed 20 Fort Riley military personnel and their families to explore post-service educational opportunities. Additionally, Washburn Tech hosted 150 middle and high school students for hands-on CTE experiences and sent 14 students to the SkillsUSA national competition in Atlanta, where one student placed third nationally.

IV. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

A. TECHNICAL PROGRAM AND CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

Member Beene moved to approve the consent agenda. Member Anderson seconded, and the motion carried.

V. DISCUSSION AGENDA

A. OTHER MATTERS

1. Chief of Staff Kelly Oliver provided an update from the annual Kansas Board of Regents retreat, held in late July in Manhattan. She announced the appointment of new board leadership. Blake Benson will serve as chair, and Diana Mendoza as vice chair. Additionally, Pamela Ammar of Wichita has been nominated to fill the seat

vacated by John Rolph, pending full Senate confirmation. Kathy Wolfe Moore, who previously filled Cindy Lane's position, was also reconfirmed to continue her term.

The retreat focused on several key topics. On the first day, the Board concentrated on economic development, featuring a presentation by Deputy Secretary of Commerce Joshua Jefferson. They also discussed the growing influence of artificial intelligence in higher education, examining both its disruptive potential and its opportunities for enhancing education delivery and workforce development. The second day was dedicated to budget discussions, including institutional budgets and the upcoming budget request to be finalized at the September board meeting. The Board also reviewed legislative priorities and explored ways to engage more actively with lawmakers to advocate for higher education initiatives.

Chief of Staff Oliver noted that the Board is considering a refresh of its strategic plan, originally adopted in 2020. As part of this process, they plan to gather input from current students, parents, high school prospects, and businesses across the state to ensure the plan remains aligned with evolving needs. Final decisions on strategic goals and the plan refresh will be made at the September meeting. The retreat concluded with several housekeeping items and administrative updates.

2. Director of Finance and Administration, Becky Pottebaum, provided a brief reminder regarding the travel policy and procedures for board members. She confirmed that there have been no changes or updates to the policy for the current year. Any travel conducted outside of scheduled Board meetings, subcommittee meetings, or assignments from staff or the Chair must be submitted to the Chair for prior approval. Each member received a copy of the travel process for reference. Director Pottebaum also reviewed the travel reimbursement form, which will be distributed at each meeting and requires member signatures.

3. Vice President of Finance and Administration, Elaine Frisbie, provided an update on the distribution of FY2026 state appropriations for community and technical colleges. She reminded members that the 2025 legislature allocated funding for coordinated institutions, including both community and technical colleges. While most of the distributions were approved by the TEA and KBOR during their spring meetings, a few required additional steps. Vice President Frisbie confirmed that the first half of tiered and non-tiered state aid has been distributed in accordance with statutory deadlines, ensuring institutions are funded for the fall semester. Additional distributions completed include capital outlay state aid, technical college operating grants, and campus restoration act funding, which was originally set at \$100,000 but finalized at \$92,350. Two funding items—student success initiative funding and business and industry apprenticeship funding—were subject to legislative provisos that applied only to community colleges. These provisos required each community college to certify to the Board that it had six months or less of cash on hand as of June 30, 2025. All community colleges submitted their certifications, and those that met the criteria received their distributions. Johnson County Community College was the only institution that reported more than six months of cash on hand and, therefore, did not qualify for additional funding under the proviso.

4. Director for Adult Education, Hector Martinez, provided an update on the FY2026 distribution of state and federal appropriations for Adult Education programs. He reported that the Kansas Board of Regents completed the Adult Education proposal process for a new five-year cycle, which opened on August 2, 2024, and closed on January 31, 2025. Of the 22 applications received, 18 were deemed eligible for Title II funding following a rigorous review process that included input from Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) partners. Despite federal-level challenges—including a May 2025 proposal to eliminate Adult Education from the state budget and delays in federal award announcements—Kansas programs remain fully funded. On July 30, 2025, the Board received final Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) allocations, including funding for Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE). Grant award notices were issued to all 18 approved programs on August 8, with funds made available through the state's distribution system on August 15. Martinez clarified that these funds are available for use from July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026.

He also addressed the ongoing need for Adult Education services in Kansas. Approximately 17% of Kansas adults perform at or below Level 1 literacy, and nearly one-third struggle with basic literacy and numeracy tasks. Around 200,000 Kansas adults lack a high school diploma, and 65,000 have less than a ninth-grade education. Additionally, over 50% of multilingual Kansans report speaking English less than “very well,” highlighting the demand for English language acquisition and workforce-aligned services. Program outcomes remain strong: 60% of participants achieve measurable skill gains within one year, averaging a two-grade-level improvement in reading and math. Many participants also earn high school equivalency diplomas, transition to postsecondary education, and obtain industry-recognized credentials in high-demand fields. Nationally, Kansas mirrors success rates, with 90% of adult learners pursuing high school equivalency achieving it within a year, nearly half enrolling in college, and 90% completing career credentials. On the federal front, the U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee approved the FY2026 budget bill on July 31, 2025, maintaining level funding for Adult Education and emphasizing timely distribution to states. Martinez concluded by affirming that Kansas Adult Education programs are well-positioned to continue serving learners effectively despite recent uncertainties.

5. Director for Workforce Development, Charmine Chambers, presented proposed changes to the Course Bucket system for approval. She explained that course buckets are used to group similar courses across the system, allowing for consistent funding calculations at the individual credit hour level. While instructional cost model rates—such as instructor rates and extraordinary costs—are established at the program level, those rates are applied at the course level. Because institutions are not required to use standardized course naming conventions, the original system, implemented in 2011, grouped similar courses into buckets based on the course content, and the assumption that they were used consistently across programs.

This review focused on high-enrollment programs with skill overlap such as diesel technology, construction, welding, electrical, HVAC, and plumbing. Many courses now span multiple program areas to meet evolving workforce training needs. Director Chambers emphasized that the original bucket assignments were not incorrect but rather based on content assumptions that no longer reflect current program structures. Of 16,263 courses in the data system, approximately 1,300 were reviewed, and 545 are recommended for reassignment to more accurate program-specific buckets for Academic Year 2025. Director Chambers clarified that no courses are being reclassified from tiered to non-tiered status as part of this recommendation.

Member Beene moved to approve the reassignment into the recommended program buckets as presented. Member Sneden seconded, and the motion carried.

6. Director Chambers presented the proposed Extraordinary Cost Rates per credit hour. Healthcare programs were included in the previous review, and this year 55 programs were reviewed, targeting areas including information technology, law, public safety, corrections and security, human services, and others. The instructional cost model was developed to specifically identify the costs related to technical education delivery and to provide a standardized mechanism to calculate the state share of those costs. The model then uses four individual cost components that represent those basic expenses that apply to every technical program and every course, including salary and benefits, institutional support, instructional support, and extraordinary costs. These four elements are calculated utilizing cost data provided by the community and technical colleges. The extraordinary costs are calculated to provide the specialized tools, equipment, and supplies that distinguish the technical hands-on training that’s needed for occupational coursework. Cost data for fiscal years 2022, 2023 and 2024 received from all institutions offering each of these programs was utilized. The formula to calculate the extraordinary cost per credit hour is to divide all the expenditures by the tiered credit hours that were delivered. Based on the data supplied, 15 programs warrant an increase in extraordinary rate, four programs demonstrate a decrease, and 36 programs that we would recommend maintain the current rate.

Member Anderson moved to approve the proposed extraordinary cost rates. Member Mikulka seconded, and the motion carried.

B. BUDGET AND FINANCE COMMITTEE AND TECHNICAL PROGRAM AND CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

1. Vice President White led a focused discussion on the Excel in CTE programs, addressing two major concerns: the growing fiscal impact, which has reached approximately \$47 million, and the need for stronger accountability and return on investment. Board staff collaborated with representatives from community and technical colleges to explore these issues and develop recommendations, which were then presented to the Budget and Finance Committee and the Program and Curriculum Committee. The next step is to gather feedback from the Technical Education Authority (TEA), with questions posed about what additional data or insights are needed to support further conversation.

One recommendation discussed was limiting enrollment to juniors and seniors; however, legal staff clarified that this would require legislative changes, as TEA does not have the authority to implement such a restriction. Another proposal involved aligning program entry with placement scores, potentially through a multiple measures system. This led to a broader conversation about whether entry requirements are necessary, especially in light of the statewide failure rate of approximately 10%. While program-level data is protected due to small cell sizes, institution-level data shows significant variation, prompting further investigation into the causes.

Accountability measures were also a key topic, including whether students who are failing should be allowed to continue enrolling in courses and whether a “sit-out” period should be considered. Concerns were raised about students continuing to accumulate failing grades, which not only impacts state funding but also harms their academic records. Another recommendation was to align course enrollment with students’ individual plans of study, rather than allowing them to take courses without a declared focus, which could improve completion rates.

Although the program is currently fully funded, there is concern about potential future budget cuts, emphasizing the need to prioritize funding. The group discussed evaluating funding by grade level and high-demand programs, as well as assessing student readiness for college-level coursework. While most institutions have probationary policies for failing students, these policies vary widely, suggesting a need for greater consistency. There was also a call to better define success metrics for the Excel in CTE program to guide future evaluations and funding decisions.

To move forward, Chair Reist recommended forming a task force to gather additional data, explore these issues in depth, and develop a consensus on next steps.

VI. NEXT MEETING REMINDER

Chair Reist closed by reminding members that the next TEA meeting will be held virtually on September 11, 2025. He thanked everyone for their attendance and contributions.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Reist adjourned the meeting at 12:23 p.m.