



# WATC

TECHNICAL COLLEGE

## CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW



SELF-STUDY  
**2014**



# Chapter 1...

## Introduction and Overview

Based on a thorough and comprehensive review of institutional documentation and practices, and as part of the formal application process, Wichita Area Technical College (WATC) submits this self-study report to attain reaccreditation from the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association (HLC-NCA). The primary purpose of this report is to document the findings of the self-study conducted by WATC and to provide visiting team members with information needed to effectively evaluate the college during their visit. This report also provides an overview of the college for its constituents, including current and potential students, faculty, staff, administrators, business and industry partners, governing board members, industry advocate teams (IAT), and the public at large.

WATC's mission, vision, values, and strategic goals provide the guidance and framework for all college activities. This self-study reflects a thorough study of the college; how the mission and goals are actualized in programs and services; and how they are documented, measured, and reviewed through ongoing evaluation efforts. This report also serves as a framework and foundation for the college community in its continuous examination and improvement of programs and services to meet the diverse learning needs and expectations of its constituents. This self-study presents evidence that WATC meets each of the HLC-NCA's five criteria:

- Mission
- Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct
- Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support
- Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement
- Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

WATC meets each criterion within the framework of its mission and goals, and the self-study provides an analysis of the college's strengths and opportunities for improvement.

## Organization of the Self-Study

WATC organized its self-study report around HLC-NCA's five criteria. It also includes chapters that present background about the college, the process used to complete the self-study, federal compliance information, a summary, and a glossary of terms and acronyms.



## Chapter 1: Introduction and Overview

Chapter 1 provides a profile of WATC, its history of accreditation, significant changes since 1995 when WATC obtained college status, and responses to the [2008 initial accreditation](#) HLC-NCA visiting team report.

## Chapter 2: Self-Study Process

Chapter 2 describes how WATC organized and conducted the self-study process. Sections include the mission and goals of the self-study; the organization of the self-study committees; the data-collection and writing processes; and the methods used to communicate information to the college community throughout the process.

## Chapters 3 Through 7: The Criterion Chapters

Chapters 3 through 7 address each criterion and are organized by core components. These chapters present information and examples of evidence in the form of narratives, charts, tables, and reference materials to support the assertions that WATC meets each criterion. Each chapter also includes highlights of strengths, concerns, and opportunities for the future based on areas within each criterion. The criteria are addressed as follows:

- [Chapter 3](#) — Criterion One: Mission
- [Chapter 4](#) — Criterion Two: Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct
- [Chapter 5](#) — Criterion Three: Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support
- [Chapter 6](#) — Criterion Four: Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement
- [Chapter 7](#) — Criterion Five: Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

## Chapter 8: Federal Compliance

Chapter 8 addresses WATC's compliance with federal regulations including credits, program length, and tuition; the Higher Education Reauthorization Act; advertising and recruitment materials; and records of student complaints.

## Chapter 9: Summary and Request for Reaccreditation

Chapter 9 requests approval for reaccreditation with HLC-NCA for a period of ten years.



## Chapter 10: Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

Chapter 10 serves as a reference and provides definitions for the terms and acronyms used throughout the self-study. A list of the persons who assisted with this self-study — the steering committee, criterion subcommittees and co-chairs, and other key individuals — can be found in [Appendix L](#) HLC-NCA Self-Study Committees. Additional items in the Appendix include:

- [Appendix A](#): Institutional Snapshot
- [Appendix B](#): History and Background
- [Appendix C](#): Kansas Public Schools, Colleges, and Universities Map
- [Appendix D](#): WATC Instructional Sites
- [Appendix E](#): Programs of Study
- [Appendix F](#): External Program Accreditations
- [Appendix G](#): Faculty Credentials
- [Appendix H](#): WATC Board Biographical Information
- [Appendix I](#): WATC Leadership Team Biographical Information
- [Appendix J](#): WATC Standing Committees
- [Appendix K](#): WATC Organizational Charts
- [Appendix L](#): HLC-NCA Self-Study Committees

## WATC History

WATC is located in Wichita, the largest city in Kansas. The college, a two-year, public institution, is the largest of the six technical colleges in Kansas. The institution was formed under the authority and supervision of the Wichita Public Schools Unified School District 259 in 1965. The institution functioned as an area vocational-technical school that enrolled high school and adult students. In 1995, Senate Bill 257 passed and was signed by the governor authorizing the transition of Wichita Area Vocational-Technical School to Wichita Area Technical College. This bill gave WATC the authority to grant college credit and award associate of applied science degrees (AAS).

Since the last accreditation visit, WATC has experienced unprecedented growth and development. In spring 2009, the college completed a major remodel of the Southside Center (Southside) campus for Health and Natural Sciences, the Practical Nurse program, and the library. The college footprint reduced from seven locations to three cam-



puses. In August 2010, the main campus for WATC moved from the Grove Campus to the National Center for Aviation Training (NCAT), a state-of-the-art, \$54 million facility.

WATC also experienced significant change in leadership with the resignation of Pete Gustaf in 2009; the [appointment of an interim president, Ray Frederick](#) in 2010; and the [appointment of Dr. Tony Kinkel](#) as WATC president in January 2011. WATC's Leadership Team also experienced significant changes with turnover in all administrative positions except one since the 2008 visit.

From 2008 to 2012, WATC's fall census enrollment grew from [1,891 students to 2,677](#), a 41 percent increase. WATC's student body reflects the diversity of the community it serves with over a third of the student population classifying themselves as ethnic minorities. In Table 1.1, WATC Student Demographics for Fiscal Years [2009–2012](#) and Sedgwick County 2010 Census Data, student demographic trends from 2009–2012 are compared to [2010 Sedgwick County census data](#). WATC's student population is more diverse than that of Sedgwick County for most ethnicities. Table 1.2, [WATC Student Age](#) Demographics for 2009–2012, indicates that WATC serves students in a wide age range.

Table 1.1							
WATC Student Ethnicity Demographics for Fiscal Years 2009–2012							
Ethnicity	2009	2010	2011	2012	WATC Percentage	Sedgwick County 2010 Census Data	Sedgwick County Percentage
American Indian (IA)	66	63	51	79	2%	American Indian	1.5 %
Asian (AS)	256	201	213	191	5%	Asian	4 %
African American (BL)	528	653	678	742	19%	Black	9 %
Hispanic American (HI)	337	298	298	303	7%	Hispanic	13 %
Pacific Islander or Native Hawaiian (PI)	NA	NA	NA	8	<1%	Pacific Islander	<1 %
White (WH)	2,576	2,093	1,809	2,015	51%	White	70 %
Unknown (UNK)	260	558	632	631	16%	UNK	3 %

Table 1.2				
WATC Student Age Demographics for 2009–2012				
Age Range	2009	2010	2011	2012
16–17	4	14	17	36
18–19	204	236	197	250
20–24	1059	1035	958	969
25–29	833	777	771	775
30–34	585	505	506	547
35–39	418	359	359	374
40–49	515	494	470	574
50–59	284	289	265	295
60+	45	51	49	56
Unknown	76	106	89	93



## Organizational Profile

In fall 2012, WATC had [151 full-time employees, including 54 full-time faculty, seven administrative personnel, and 90 professional staff](#). In addition, WATC employed 50-plus part-time employees; 20-plus federal work-study students; and approximately 113 adjunct faculty members. WATC has the capacity to serve over 6,000 students on three campuses in buildings that collectively have 65 classrooms, 40 laboratories, and over [379,000 square feet of space on 52 acres](#). All classrooms and laboratories are equipped with appropriate instructional-technology equipment.

The college has an [open-door enrollment policy](#) with entry-level assessment requirements. Students may enroll in [five distinct areas of study](#): Aviation, Healthcare, Design, Manufacturing, and General Education, which have been developed by WATC and are appropriate to the board-approved mission, “... to provide quality higher education and leadership in workforce training that supports economic development for a global economy.” WATC’s outcomes-based learning, discussed in Chapter 6, p. \_\_, supports the mission by providing multiple avenues for students to achieve their desired goals. Credit courses are offered and sequenced to result in certificates of completion, technical certificates, and associate of applied science degrees (AAS) in career-technical education fields, and, where appropriate, students may transfer credits toward baccalaureate education. Currently, most long-term programs have multiple starting points throughout the academic year with stackable curriculum that allows for multiple entry and exit points. Students can pursue a wide range of educational goals through more than 75 programs of study. [Academic Success](#), Essential Basic Skills, [Adult Literacy](#), and General Educational Development (GED) preparatory courses provide developmental instruction to assist students in acquiring the skills necessary to achieve high school credentials; meet college admission requirements; perform successfully in technical education programs; and enter, retain, or improve workforce employment options. WATC addresses workforce education and training needs through customized training courses; skills-update and recertification courses; and [business and industry partnerships](#).

WATC implemented online instruction in academic year 2007–2008 with 22 courses. Today, more than 20 percent of all course offerings are [Web-based](#), and an additional 18 percent of courses are in a hybrid delivery modality. WATC continues to update instructional technology, add additional online courses, investigate other alternative delivery models, and design flexible-scheduling models to accommodate students’ needs.

## WATC Governance

WATC is coordinated through state authority and governed by a local board. In November 2004, the Sedgwick County Board of County Commissioners established the [Sedgwick County Technical Education and Training Authority \(SCTETA\)](#). The SCTETA board membership includes an impressive group of community and business



leaders appointed by the Sedgwick County Board of County Commissioners. In January 2007, this authority became the governing board for WATC (WATC Board), and consists of 11 appointed, voting members who establish and publish policies, regulations, and procedures that pertain to WATC. WATC's board membership includes executives from major employers, such as Bombardier Learjet, J.R. Custom Metal Products, Cessna Aircraft Company, Intrust Bank, Spirit AeroSystems, Airbus Americas, Via Christi Health, Wesley Medical Center, and elected officials from the city of Wichita and the Sedgwick County Board of County Commissioners.

The nine-member [\*Kansas Board of Regents \(KBOR\)\*](#) is the governing board for the state's six universities and the coordinating board for the state's 26 other public higher-education institutions — one public university, 19 community colleges, and six technical colleges. In addition, KBOR oversees the state's student financial aid, adult education, GED, and career and technical education programs. Within KBOR's purview is the establishment of policies related to all institutions and the approval of all courses and programs.

The Kansas Legislature established the Kansas Postsecondary [\*Technical Education Authority \(TEA\)\*](#) in 2007. As delineated through legislation, TEA functions under the auspices of KBOR and makes recommendations to KBOR regarding coordination; statewide planning; and improvements and enhancements to the postsecondary technical-education system. TEA is comprised of 12 members appointed from state leadership in business, industry, and education. As new programs are presented for approval, TEA ensures that proposed programs align with business and industry needs for current and emerging high-skill, high-wage occupations. Institutions must demonstrate local, regional, and/or statewide need for proposed technical education and training programs by identifying occupational shortages, potential wages, student interest, and local industry support for the occupational area for which the proposed program will prepare graduates. TEA utilizes information from various labor studies and partners with the Department of Commerce and the Department of Labor to continually refine, identify, and communicate Kansas' workforce needs.

## Financial Resources

[\*Financial support\*](#) for WATC comes from three major sources — state postsecondary aid, Sedgwick County allocations, and other funds consisting of tuition, fees, grants, and investments. A complete discussion of WATC's financial resources can be found in [\*Chapter 4\*](#).

While WATC has faced financial challenges over the past four years, it has remained solvent by actively engaging the WATC Board in financial decisions and strategically aligning human capital with community educational needs. As a



result, WATC pursued additional grants, donations of equipment and supplies, access to business and industry subject-matter experts, and financial contributions for scholarships and equipment. In 2010, to improve the college's budget situation, all employees experienced up to six weeks unpaid furlough. The college negotiated a refinancing of debt in 2010, which made debt payments more manageable and improved WATC's financial outlook.

State-level discussions and decisions regarding a [new funding system](#) of technical education began in June 2009 when the TEA recommended that KBOR implement a credit-hour based, tiered-cost model for career and technical education. By May of the following year, a new funding model for technical education was proposed by KBOR to its members. During the following year, the details were discussed among the state community and technical colleges. In 2011, [Senate Bill 143](#) created the Postsecondary Tiered Technical Education State Aid Act. Beginning in fiscal year 2012, each community college, technical college, and Washburn Institute of Technology would be eligible for postsecondary tiered technical education state aid for credit hours approved by KBOR utilizing the model created by KBOR.

The credit-hour cost model recognizes and supports cost differentials associated with providing high-demand, high-tech training; considers target industries critical to the Kansas economy; responds to program growth; considers local taxing authority for credit hours generated by in-district students; and includes other factors and considerations deemed necessary by KBOR. Continued development includes the refinement of current funding appropriations/structures to more clearly identify funding and expenditures specifically for technical education as well as potential options for financing the new model in the future. WATC supports the new TEA and recognizes this as a positive step for Kansas as technical education progresses to a new level. In 2013, WATC received additional state dollars based on technical credit-hour growth directly attributable to the new funding formula.

## Accreditation History

Over the past 13 years, WATC has been accredited by the Council on Occupational Education (COE) and/or HLC-NCA:

- In 2001, WATC received accreditation from COE.
- With the passage of Senate Bill 7, WATC sought accreditation, and in 2006, WATC received candidacy status with HLC-NCA.
- In 2007, WATC received reaccreditation through COE.
- In October 2008, WATC received initial accreditation with HLC-NCA for five-years.





## Responses to Institutional Challenges from 2008

In HLC-NCA's *Exit Report of a Comprehensive Evaluation Visit for Initial Accreditation for WATC, August 4–6, 2008*, the visiting team cited institutional challenges that WATC needed to address. Attention to these concerns and developing plans to improve in these areas have been major initiatives for WATC over the past five years. Faculty and support staff recognize the importance of these endeavors and have worked diligently to address them. This section addresses the challenges stated during the 2008 comprehensive visit and in the team report. Subsequent chapters of this report also address these topics and include supporting evidence of achievement and implications for the future.

### 1. Institutional Challenge Criterion One

**Recommendation:** *Mission statement needs appropriate changes.*

**WATC Response:** With the [acquisition and transfer](#) of [Cowley College](#) programs, facilities, and employees in June 2008, which included general education offerings beginning in August 2008 and a [general education transfer agreement](#) between Wichita State University (WSU) and WATC, the college's mission fundamentally expanded. Students matriculating to WATC were now able to enroll in general education courses for the purpose of transferring into baccalaureate programs at WSU. The impact of this change necessitated review of the college's mission statement. In November 2008, the work began to revise the college's mission, vision, and values. During spring 2009, college leadership met with focus groups that represented various constituent groups — the board, IATs, students, faculty, and staff. These meetings resulted in revisions of the mission, vision, and values and established a five-year strategic plan to be implemented in fiscal year 2011. The WATC Board received the input from all groups. After this input was received, the new [mission, vision, values](#), and strategic plan were developed and approved by WATC's Leadership Team, the Faculty Council, and the WATC Board. The revised documents became effective March 25, 2010.

### 2. Institutional Challenge Criterion Two

**Recommendation:** *Need to identify specific goals related to access and supporting success of a diverse student population.*

**WATC Response:** WATC excels at having [racially diverse](#) campuses. Overall, WATC's demographic makeup is more diverse than the city of Wichita and that of Sedgwick County. Black and Asian student representation surpasses the surrounding community with a student population of 19 percent African-American, 5 percent Asian, 51 percent Caucasian, and 7 percent Hispanic/Latino.



One ethnic group that is under-represented at WATC, compared to the surrounding area, is the Hispanic/Latino student group. In 2012, to focus on this student group, the college defined performance indicators in the [strategic plan](#) (Goal 1.2) and the KBOR [Performance Agreement](#) (P.A. 2.5) to enroll more Hispanic/Latino students. The goal is that in each target year, the baseline will increase by 15 students (2012/322, 2013/337, and 2014/352). This indicator directly supports KBOR's own strategic plan, Foresight 2020. Targeted marketing and recruiting efforts were implemented for this specific demographic group, and in fall 2012, the number of Hispanic/Latino students enrolled increased and reached the 2013 goal.

**Recommendation:** *Expose students to the concepts of globalization and diversity.*

**WATC Response:** At the last site visit, WATC was a young college with regard to general education coursework. With the integration of general education courses into all AAS degree programs, WATC offers students opportunities to study global issues within its science coursework; a [service learning](#) component within psychology and sociology coursework; and global economy and world issues in general education business coursework. WATC's [Global Professional Standards](#) course is required in many programs where teaching and learning emphasize work ethics, résumé writing, communication, teamwork, and conflict resolution. In fall 2009, a module was added in identifying and discussing diversity, developing an appreciation for and an understanding of diversity in a global world of work.

**Recommendation:** *Human Resources [follow-up report](#) due to HLC-NCA by August 8, 2009.*

**WATC Response:** Completed and approved by HLC-NCA in August 2009.

### 3. Institutional Challenges Criterion Three

**Recommendation:** *Determine which transfer-level courses should be part of the general education block for AAS degrees.*

**WATC Response:** At the time of the last HLC-NCA site visit, [general education courses](#) for WATC were just evolving, and the college had three programs of study with AAS degrees. By fall 2009, each AAS degree included a minimum of 15 credit hours of transferable general education courses. Three years later, all technical certificate programs have an AAS degree option that includes defined general education courses. All technical certificate programs include various elements of general education requirements to provide learning that



enhances the technical coursework. The IATs and faculty determine which general education courses should be included in the technical certificate and AAS degree programs. The identified general education core for all AAS degree programs includes College Algebra, Composition I, Computer Applications, Public Speaking/Interpersonal Communication, and General Psychology/Principles of Sociology.

**Recommendation:** *Concern with full-time/adjunct instructor ratio in general education.*

**WATC Response:** In fall 2008, the college had six full-time general education faculty, and adjunct faculty taught the remaining general education courses. In fall 2013, the number of faculty who teach general education courses and provide lead-faculty oversight for adjunct faculty in their discipline areas increased to thirteen [full-time employees](#). Also, the Academic Affairs division reorganized in summer 2011 and added a dean, General Education, position.

**Recommendation:** *Develop a method for analyzing assessment results that drives budget decisions.*

**WATC Response:** WATC uses multiple methods to analyze assessment results. WATC currently has clearly stated course, program, and [general education outcomes](#). Faculty in each discipline and their IATs develop these outcomes, and they review them annually. As part of the statewide [KBOR Program Alignment](#) process, many technical programs include external industry credentials. These outcomes link to WATC's mission as they pertain to particular courses or programs. If criteria for success in any outcomes are not met, plans for improvement are developed. Also, outcomes are revised if they need to be updated or replaced. General education faculty, through the statewide [KBOR Core Outcomes Project](#), are charged with reviewing general education outcomes. Budgetary decisions based on assessments include increased full-time faculty, changes in curriculum, professional development, and technology support. Assessment is also tied to [program review](#) to ensure that faculty complete their annual assessment reviews.

**Recommendation:** *Assess library personnel needs and hours of operation to accommodate students.*

**WATC Response:** A full-time director and two part-time assistants staff the [library](#). Part-time adjunct faculty and federal work-study students provide additional front-desk coverage. The library has staff available throughout the day, in the evenings, and on Saturdays. All staff members receive library customerservice training. The library director's schedule is flexible so classes that meet outside library hours or at a different campus can receive library and information literacy training. The library is now open extended hours



during the week — from 7:30 a.m., prior to beginning classes, until 8 p.m., after the last classes have begun. Saturdays, the library is open from 9 a.m. to noon to everyone, but especially to those who need the library on weekends. The library Web page provides information about the library and offers continuous assistance so everyone can utilize the online research options. In addition, online services and access are available to students through WATC's Web site and Web portal ([myWATC](#)), so students can access state of Kansas library databases. An e-mail link and phone numbers are also available for those who have questions but cannot come to the library.

**Recommendation:** *Establish a bookstore on the main campus and maintain bookstore at Southside Center.*

**WATC Response:** WATC opened a [bookstore](#) at NCAT in August 2010, and the bookstore at the Southside campus remains open. The bookstore sells textbooks, laptops, computer software, program-specific supplies, general supplies, beverages, snacks, and clothing representing WATC and NCAT. The hours of operation meet the needs of daytime and evening students, and both bookstores are open additional hours during peak enrollment and at the beginning of each semester.

**Recommendation:** *Standardize placement testing scores.*

**WATC Response:** Standardized [placement testing](#) scores were implemented in fall 2009 as a result of general education courses being integrated into AAS degree programs. The ACT® [COMPASS®](#) test is required for placement into general education courses. A 2009 analysis of math skills assessment resulted in the addition of the COMPASS® Numerical Skills test to identify an additional level of math skills for prospective students. All technical programs have admission requirements and specific assessments on which applicants must meet minimum scores. Input from each program's IAT is requested regarding math and reading levels necessary to be successful in each career field. Deans and faculty review placement cutoffs annually.

**Recommendation:** *Expand, enhance and clarify the development education courses to coincide with transferability issues and meet KBOR's requirements.*

**WATC Response:** Since the last site visit, new academic courses — Essential Basic Skills ([EBS](#)), were developed in the General Education department. College Reading Skills, Sentence Structure, Basic Paragraph Writing, Basic Writing Skills, English, Basic Arithmetic, Pre-Algebra, Math Fundamentals, and Elementary Algebra have all been a part of the EBS curriculum. Students



may enroll in a self-paced curriculum through the college's [Academic Success Center](#) in some open-learning courses in which they receive one-on-one, computer-based instruction. EBS courses are not transferable and are clearly distinguished from transferrable courses in WATC's catalog, schedule, and Web descriptions. All AAS degree programs require at least College Algebra and Composition I to meet transfer and KBOR requirements.

**Recommendation:** *Coordination and enhancement of advising and counseling services between Learner Services personnel and instructors.*

**WATC Response:** [Student Services](#), formerly Learner Services, has undergone three changes in leadership since the site visit in fall 2008. The career planners were renamed academic advisors, and in fall 2012, they became academic coaches. Faculty continue to work with students to ensure that their course sequences are correct and to answer specific curriculum and technical program concerns. Enrollment and course coaching is provided by academic coaches. The coaches are assigned to specific programs to develop relationships with their students and work closely with faculty to gain program knowledge. In spring 2013, periodic meetings took place to bolster communication between the Vice President, Academic Affairs, dean, academic coordinator, and the coach. A dean of students position was created in 2011 to oversee college retention efforts and the academic coaches at the Southside campus. This person also collaborates with faculty and Academic Affairs on violations of the Student Code of Conduct policy.

**Recommendation:** *Collect and analyze data from assessments and use when making budgeting decisions.*

**WATC Response:** Specific to general education, WATC has completed four cycles of [general education assessment](#) focused on the college's six general education outcomes. These assessment practices revolve around English, speech, math, social sciences, science, and computer applications. Relying on embedded standard measurements, faculty analyze these assessment practices annually for improvements/changes in the core general education curriculum and instruction. Over the past four years, changes have been implemented in computer and science courses using assessment results.



#### 4. Institutional Challenges Criterion Four

**Recommendation:** Continue to implement and utilize the program-review process for programmatic improvement, planning, and budgeting processes.

**WATC Response:** The primary purpose of [program review](#) is to improve academic programs through the processes of collecting evidence relative to quality; to share reflection regarding a program's current status and future direction; and to obtain constructive feedback through peer and administrative review. In academic year 2010–2011, a revised academic program-review process was implemented with a focus on continuous program improvement, student learning outcomes, and integration of academic reporting. Narratives, planning, and decisions emerging out of the program-review process are important commentaries on the quality of academic programs that are not duplicated elsewhere. Thus, it is appropriate for program review to be used as one piece of information about academic programs in the institutional planning and financial decision-making processes. The program-review process occurs on a yearly basis with scheduled work completed each fall, spring, and summer semester. The completed yearly program review is returned to the appropriate academic dean and the vice president, Academic Affairs. A collaborative feedback and discussion session is then held with each department. Academic excellence is dependent on talented, knowledgeable, dedicated, and highly motivated faculty and staff. The coordinated efforts of faculty and administration in the academic program-review process produce benefits for all stakeholders of the college community. Students benefit from the instructional and facility improvements that programs make as a result of the information obtained from the self-study. This information also allows faculty to make the necessary curricular changes that keep programs current and rigorous. WATC can also make sound policy and allocation decisions based on this self-study information. Employers, and the state and nation, benefit from graduates who are more prepared to excel in the workplace.

**Recommendation:** [General education follow-up report](#) due to HLC-NCA by August 29, 2010.

**WATC Response:** Submitted and approved by HLC-NCA in August 2010.

**Recommendation:** Expand collaborative relationships with area K-12 school districts to establish career pathways for high school students.

**WATC Response:** WATC is actively working on this initiative, and the college now has over 30 [active agreements](#) with area high schools.



Kansas Governor Sam Brownback highlighted the importance of career and technical education for Kansas high school students June 27, 2012, at a ceremonial signing of [Senate Bill 155](#) at WATC's NCAT campus. Stakeholders from industries and higher education institutions, as well as elected officials at state and local levels, joined the governor for the signing. The new law provides all [high school students](#) free tuition for technical education courses taken at nearby technical and community colleges. It also establishes an incentive program for school districts to get students involved in career and technical education prior to graduating from high school. The incentive program also gives each school district \$1,000 for each high school student who graduates from that district with an industry-recognized credential in a high-need occupation as identified by the Kansas Secretary of Labor. After the new law went into effect July 1, 2012, high school concurrent enrollment grew from 26 students in fall 2011 to 353 students for the spring 2013 semester — an eleven-fold increase. WATC made a [budget commitment](#) based on this initiative and added a director, Educational Partnerships, position that began in Kansas Schools in 2012.

