



ABSTRACT: Pathways to Success in Health Sciences

Wichita Area Technical College (WATC), an open-door, two-year comprehensive college in Wichita, KS, proposes a Title III project that will expand capacity through new programs and improve student success in health science programs in order to connect WATC students with growing area employment opportunities while increasing enrollment revenue.

Located within the largest city in Kansas, consolidations in area industries have eliminated so many jobs in the past decade the area is reeling. WATC serves a high-need population (78% low income, 46% minority, 77% underprepared, and 73% first generation) from an expansive seven-county district (pop. 675,000). Economic distress, throughout Wichita's urban-core, impacts 65.1% of WATC students coming from *pockets of poverty*—zip codes with poverty ranging from 24.4% to 41.5%. Unemployment in the area is 10 percent higher than the state average—leading many non-traditional and at-risk students (avg. student age 26, 75% working) to WATC in hopes of gaining training that will connect them with secure, well-paying careers.

Increasingly, employment opportunities are in health sciences. The Kansas Hospital Association projects that the healthcare will gain 4,000 jobs statewide through 2020. There has been a shortage nationwide in Emergency Medical Technician /Paramedics and locally there were 465 job openings in 2014. Cardiac Sonography jobs have grown 20.7% regionally in the last year, and are anticipated to grow 20% more over the next 10 years. Veterinary Technicians are needed to fill the growing health care for animals including comprehensive dental cleaning among other needed Vet Tech skills. Vet Tech jobs promise salaries averaging \$40,000 annually.

However, limited capacity, and inadequate support services hamper efforts to strengthen our health sciences programs and further develop our health sciences career pipeline. Over a third of WATC students (35%) identify completion of health studies as an educational goal, and current waiting lists cause us to turn away twice as many as we are able to serve.

To address our weaknesses and tap into area opportunities while building essential enrollment-based revenues, we propose several strategies, practices, and programs:

- Add new Health Science programs. Develop the Emergency Medical Technician certificate as well as core curricula leading to three Associates of Applied Science (AAS) degrees: Paramedic, Cardiac Sonography, and Veterinarian Technology.
- Strengthen Health Science support: Develop new Health Studies advising and tutoring systems, Establish a new Health Science Success Center

By the end of the grant period, WATC expects to see an increase in the number of Health Studies degrees and certificates awarded as well as an increase in overall enrollment and enrollment-based revenue. Total Five-Year Budget Request: \$2,248,645

Citing the following two studies that meet the Moderate Evidence of Effectiveness standards, WATC is responding to the FY2015 Title III Competitive Preference Priority:

1. Bettinger and Baker, *The Effects of Student Coaching in College: an Evaluation of a Randomized Experiment in Student Mentoring*, 2011
2. Beck and Chizhik, *An Experimental Study of Cooperative Learning in CSI*, 2008