

Shared solutions:

The Kansas perspective

Lana Oleen

Lana Oleen served 16 years in the Kansas Senate, acting as majority leader from 2000 to 2004. During her tenure, she chaired and served as a committee member of the Legislative Education Planning Committee, where several of the initiatives discussed in the following essay were developed and passed into law. Oleen also has served as chair of the National Conference of State Legislatures Standing Committees and of the Midwestern Higher Education Compact. She currently chairs the audit committee of the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards. She earned her bachelor's and master's degrees from Emporia State University and is a Kansas Master Teacher.

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Diane Lindeman is director of student financial assistance for the Kansas Board of Regents. She holds a bachelor's degree in secondary education, a master's degree in counseling psychology and is studying for a master's degree in public administration—all from the University of Kansas. Lindeman has more than 20 years of higher education student service experience. Before joining the staff of the Board of Regents, she was director of admissions at the University of Kansas School of Law, associate director of student financial aid at Baker University, and served as assistant director of student financial aid and of admissions at the University of Kansas.

Executive summary

The State of Kansas has collaborated with other stakeholders for many years to combat problems in higher education. Original collaborative efforts, such as in recruitment and retention of medical professionals, fostered a cooperative mindset that has broadened efforts to increase student access despite the rising costs of higher education. Kansas has developed relationships with other states, local communities, private businesses and its own state agencies.

Kansas and Missouri have negotiated a reciprocal tuition agreement to address shortfalls in educational resources in each state. Kansas residents enroll in the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Dentistry and the University of Missouri-St. Louis School of Optometry at the Missouri resident tuition rates. In exchange, Missouri residents pay Kansas resident tuition rates to attend the architecture programs at the University of Kansas and Kansas State University. Kansas purchased seats for its residents at optometry institutions in Tennessee and Oklahoma. Students pay the resident tuition, and the State of Kansas pays the difference between resident and out-of-state tuition. Moreover, Kansas' membership in the Midwest Higher Education Compact provides Kansas students with discounted tuition rates at participating public and private universities in other member states.

The Kansas Board of Regents has developed relationships with other state agencies to coordinate information about student assistance and other programs. The National Guard Tuition Assistance Program provides members with assistance up to 100 percent of tuition and fees if they meet certain criteria and commit to a continuation of Guard service. The Foster Care Tuition Waiver Program waives tuition and fees for students who have been in the state's foster care system. Finally, concurrent enrollment allows students to take college-level courses for college credit while they are still in high school. This program allows the student to graduate from college in less time than would be possible otherwise.

Collaborations between the state and local entities and private businesses also have been developed. For example, the Nursing Service Scholarship Program provides a scholarship to students enrolled in nursing programs. Students must have a sponsor that pays a portion of the scholarship. In return, they then commit to working at the sponsoring facility upon graduation. The Kansas Career Work Study Program provides postsecondary students with vital career-related employment; the educational institution and the business each pay a portion of the student's wages.

These collaborative efforts, along with two recent access initiatives, have allowed Kansas to implement a variety of programs to reduce the cost of higher education for its students. As the economy continues to improve, additional efforts will be made to provide access and affordability for students seeking higher education in Kansas.

Introduction

In *Collision Course: Rising College Costs Threaten America's Future and Require Shared Solutions*, Robert Dickeson states, "Tackling and surmounting this complex issue will require efforts undertaken by many parties working in a common direction." The State of Kansas has taken just such a collaborative approach, working with other stakeholders to combat problems in higher education. Original collaborative efforts, such as recruitment and retention of medical professionals, fostered a cooperative mindset that has broadened student access despite the rising costs of higher education.

Two other student assistance programs, the Nursing Service Scholarship and the Dental Program, have existed for approximately 15 years. These were designed primarily to address the need for medical professionals in rural areas of Kansas. The programs reduce—and in some cases eliminate—cost to students. More recent programs, such as the National Guard Tuition Assistance Program and the Foster Care Tuition Waiver Program, were implemented solely to assist more students with higher education expenses.

Collaboration among several parties was essential to these programs' success. Cooperation was required not only among state agencies but also with other states, the private sector and other local entities. These relationships have helped Kansas increase student access to higher education and cut the associated costs.

Collaboration with other states

Kansas, like many other states, struggles to recruit and retain medical professionals for its rural locations. The lack of dental or optometry schools in the state complicates the problem; Kansas could not "grow its own." Kansas' solution therefore required options for professional education in other states.

Reciprocity in Dental Agreement and Optometry Service Program

Whereas Kansas lacks a dental or optometry school, Missouri lacks a public school of architecture. The two states have negotiated a reciprocal tuition agreement to use existing resources rather than take the costly step of developing additional programs themselves. The agreement allows 80 Kansas residents to enroll in the University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC) School of Dentistry and 20 Kansas residents to enroll in the University of Missouri-St. Louis (UMSL) School of Optometry at Missouri resident tuition rates. In exchange, 491 Missouri residents pay Kansas resident tuition rates at the University of Kansas School of Architecture and Urban Design and the Kansas State University College of Architecture, Planning and Design. (The apparent imbalance in the number of students reflects the differing costs at a dental or optometry school in comparison to the costs of an architecture school.)

The agreement allows students to attend the respective institutions for thousands of dollars less than they would have paid otherwise. The discounted tuition often is the deciding factor in career choices. Over the last 10 years, the enrollment of Kansas residents in the dental program at UMKC has remained relatively steady at between 70 and 80 students each year.

The table on the following page notes the differences in resident and nonresident tuition at the four institutions for Fall 2004.

Kansas also actually purchased seats for its residents in optometry programs in Tennessee and Oklahoma. A student pays the resident tuition, and the State of Kansas pays the difference between resident and out-of-state tuition. Twelve seats (including three for freshmen) at the Southern College of Optometry in Memphis are reserved for Kansas residents, as are eight seats (including two for freshmen) at the

Differences in resident and nonresident tuition

Institution	Resident tuition	Nonresident tuition
UMKC School of Dentistry	\$ 10,555	\$ 20,571
UMSL School of Optometry	\$ 8,928	\$ 16,955
University of Kansas	\$ 2,368	\$ 6,346
Kansas State University	\$ 2,333	\$ 6,713

Northeastern State University School of Optometry in Tahlequah, Okla.

Because Kansas actually pays a portion of the tuition, individuals filling the seats in Tennessee or Oklahoma have a service obligation to the State of Kansas upon graduation. They must be licensed and practice in Kansas one year for each year they receive assistance.

Individuals who do not meet the service obligation must repay the tuition difference with interest. Revenue from repayments is used to fund the purchase of the seats. Since the program's inception, 74 percent of optometry students who have graduated from Southern College of Optometry or Northeastern State University are practicing in Kansas or have met their service obligations.

The approved funding for the purchased optometry seats in Tennessee and Oklahoma for the 2004-2005 academic year—equivalent to the students' total cost savings—is \$128,850. This amount does not include the seats at the University of Missouri-St. Louis because funding is not exchanged in that agreement.

One student's story

Karen was a Kansas high school teacher who decided, while demonstrating a career aptitude software package to one of her classes, that *she* needed a career change. She took evening and weekend classes to acquire the math and science courses needed for optometry school and entered the University of Missouri-St. Louis in 1987. After graduation, she returned to her home (and her husband) in Hill City, Kan., to open a practice. Karen is now the only optometrist in two counties.

Karen explains: "[The optometry program] allowed me to obtain an education at a cost that was more affordable because of the in-state tuition, and so I graduated with a more manageable debt. Because my education debt was smaller, I was able to establish a practice in a small western Kansas town that otherwise would not have had an optometrist."

Midwest Student Exchange Program

The Midwest Higher Education Compact (MHEC) was founded in 1990. Its members are Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio and Wisconsin. Kansas, a charter member, actively participates in the Compact's Midwest Student Exchange Program. Residents of member states may receive reduced tuition at participating institutions in other member states. Students from participating states who attend a public institution pay no more than 150 percent of resident tuition. Moreover, students attending a private institution receive a 10 percent discount on tuition. According to MHEC, more than 17,000 students have used the program since 1994. Almost 7,000 of these students were Kansans, who saved an estimated total of \$21.4 million in tuition costs.

Collaboration among state agencies

Cooperation among state agencies is an important aspect of reducing the cost of higher education in Kansas. Two recent initiatives offer tuition assistance for members of the Kansas National Guard and a tuition waiver for students who have been in the state's foster care system.

National Guard Educational Assistance Program

Because of the state's strong military history and the continued presence of the military at several installations around the state, Kansas readily accepts its responsibility to its military personnel. In 1996, the Kansas legislature enacted the National Guard Educational Assistance Act, which allows members of the Kansas National Guard who meet certain criteria to receive up to 100 percent of tuition and fees at the state's institutions of higher education. Eligible individuals must be residents of Kansas, must have been in the Guard less than 15 years, and cannot have a baccalaureate or higher academic degree. Other eligibility criteria relate to the individual's entitlement to federal educational benefits.

The program requires a service commitment from the recipient. Guard members must complete their current Guard service and commit to an additional three months of service for each semester of assistance received. Should the service obligation be unfulfilled, the participant is required to repay the amount of the assistance, plus interest. These repayments are funneled back into the program to fund additional awards.

The Kansas Board of Regents and the Adjutant General's Office must work closely to determine each applicant's eligibility. The Board of Regents receives and processes applications and is the agency to which the funding is appropriated. The Adjutant General's Office verifies that the applicant is indeed eligible for the benefits.

One student's story

Erin is a senior airman with the Kansas Air National Guard and a student at Emporia State University. She has been in the Guard for two years and plans to make a career of it. Erin's father was an officer in the Army, so the military has always been a part of her life. Her family moved from place to place while she was growing up, but she considers Gardner, Kan., her home and plans to return there to teach high school theater when she graduates. Erin did not learn about the tuition assistance program until after she began college. Although the program did not play a part in her decision to begin college, Erin is very grateful for the assistance as she furthers her education.

Erin states, "It's really a helpful program. The assistance allows me to be in school and not have to work multiple jobs to pay for it."

An additional collaborative link exists with the Kansas Lottery. Beginning in 2003, a veterans' benefit scratch-off ticket was made available to the public. The estimated \$500,000 yearly proceeds are divided equally between the National Guard Educational Assistance Program and the state's veterans' homes. Although the actual amount of the assistance and number of recipients varies, depending on the level of appropriations and the number of eligible applicants, the 2005 award is an estimated \$1,800 for each of approximately 515 students.

Foster Care Tuition Waiver Program

The 2002 Kansas legislature passed an initiative addressing the lack of resources and family support for higher education for individuals who "age out" of the foster care system at 18. The Foster Care Tuition Waiver

Program was established to assist those students in pursuing higher education. Individuals otherwise eligible for admissions and who meet either of the following criteria are eligible to receive a waiver of tuition and fees at public educational institutions in the state:

- The student was in the foster care system before or on his or her 18th birthday and graduated from high school or attained a General Educational Development (GED) certificate while in the foster care system.
- The student was adopted out of a foster care placement on or after his or her 16th birthday.

In addition, students must apply to a college or university within two years of high school graduation or attainment of a GED. Students can receive waivers for eight semesters or until the semester in which they reach age 21.

This collaborative effort involves the Kansas Board of Regents, the educational institutions and the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services. The Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services verifies the eligibility of the applicants. The educational institutions are reimbursed the amount of the tuition and fees by the Board of Regents, which uses federal Chafee Foster Care Independence Grant funds transferred from the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services. All of the entities must work together closely to process and verify the applications.

Students who receive the tuition waiver do not have a continuing service obligation after graduation. However, to remain eligible, students must be enrolled full time and maintain part-time employment of an average of 10 hours per week. In this way, students not only continue their education but also gain work experience for life after college.

For the 2004-2005 academic year, 64 students used the waiver at 17 institutions, for a total funding amount

of \$74,897. This figure was double that of the previous academic year. Only three years into the program, available funding still exceeds demand. However, the program continues to grow as more foster care children learn about the waiver and enter the higher education system.

Concurrent enrollment

In 1993, the state legislature passed the Kansas Challenge to Secondary School Pupils Act, which authorized certain secondary school students to enroll in classes at a postsecondary institution. In most instances, students receive credit at both secondary and postsecondary institutions. The Kansas Board of Regents and the Kansas Department of Education collaborate to determine the eligibility of students, courses and faculty.

The program provides multiple benefits to students. Individuals who have completed the requirements for high school graduation can take courses for college credit. Although they pay the usual tuition rate at the postsecondary institution, the overall cost of higher education for the student is reduced. After students graduate from high school, college credits earned during high school could reduce the time needed on the college or university campus, allowing the student to graduate with a baccalaureate degree in three rather than four years.

Collaboration with local and private entities

Communities and private businesses in Kansas have always taken a strong role in making the decisions and addressing the issues that affect their citizens. With this in mind, the state has collaborated with local entities to reduce costs for students seeking higher education.

Kansas Nursing Service Scholarship Program

Another medical shortage in Kansas, especially in the rural communities, is in nursing. One solution to the problem is the Kansas Nursing Service Scholarship

Program. Created in 1989, the program offers students lower educational costs. Meanwhile communities benefit from committed, skilled nurses.

A medical facility, a state agency that employs nurses, or a psychiatric hospital must sponsor the potential student. The current statutory maximum annual award is 70 percent of the cost of attendance at nursing school. Actual appropriations at this time have dictated a funding level sufficient for annual scholarships of \$2,500 for licensed practical nurse (LPN) programs and \$3,500 for registered nurse (RN) programs. Rural or small facilities pay \$1,000 of the scholarship, whereas urban and larger facilities pay half of the scholarship.

In keeping with the policy of other service scholarships, students must fulfill a service obligation upon graduation. Nurses must work for one year at the sponsoring facility for each year of assistance received.

One student's story

Jamie is a nursing student at Kansas Wesleyan University. She is not a traditional student; she is the mother of four who was out of school for 20 years before returning to pursue an associate's degree to become an RN. She had always considered becoming a nurse because she likes working with and taking care of others, but the educational costs seemed prohibitive. Jamie is only receiving the scholarship for one year because of a filing error on the part of her sponsoring institution. Even one year of assistance, however, made all the difference in her career choice.

Jamie reports, "I wouldn't have been able to do this without the scholarship. It takes a big bite out of the repayment (of educational loans)."

If the service obligation is not met, both the state and the sponsor must be repaid with interest. The state portion of any repayments is used to fund additional awards. Since the beginning of the program, 83 percent of students are fulfilling or have fulfilled their service obligations.

Cooperation between the state and the sponsoring facilities has gone beyond simply establishing the program. These entities continue to collaborate to keep student costs low. Downturns in the economy greatly increase the number of applications submitted for financial assistance, a trend especially apparent in the Nursing Service Scholarship Program since 2001. The average number of applications received annually between 1998 and 2001 was 154. However, from 2001 to 2004, that average rose to 227 applications. Unfortunately, economic downturns also result in reduced state funding. An increase in overall sponsor funding, however, has kept the average number of awards granted relatively stable. In the 2004-2005 academic year, an estimated 137 students received awards at an average of \$3,140 per award.

Kansas Career Work Study Program

In 1988 the state legislature enacted a program designed to provide career-related work experience to students enrolled in a state or municipal university. The students work part-time in a job related to their course of study. The employer pays at least 50 percent of the student's wages; the educational institution pays up to 50 percent.

Currently, approximately 13 percent of the educational institution portion of funding for this program is set aside for the Youth Education Service (YES) Program. Participants provide tutoring and mentoring to elementary and secondary students in high-risk schools. School districts are not required to provide the matching funds.

The program has many benefits. Students not only receive income to help defray college expenses, they also get valuable work experience in their chosen fields. The businesses receive manpower at a greatly reduced cost (or, in the case of school districts, at no cost). Moreover, at-risk elementary and secondary pupils receive the extra attention they need to help them succeed.

State funding for the program has remained relatively stable between 1994 and 2004, with an increase of 2.1 percent. The employer contribution increased by 10.9 percent during that period. This difference reflects the statutory language concerning the wage payment: The educational institution pays *up* to 50 percent, and the employer pays *at least* 50 percent.

The state's YES allocation increased by 31.6 percent between 1994 and 2004 because of a recognized need for tutors and mentors for at-risk elementary and secondary students. Although school districts are not required to provide matching funds, they often do; the level of funding therefore has varied considerably from year to year. Estimates for the program for academic year 2004-2005 are state funding of \$528,172 and employer funding of approximately \$580,000, which will assist approximately 600 students.

Recent access initiatives

The Kansas legislature recently passed or funded initiatives that, while not falling neatly into the categories described above, do improve access and reduce the costs of higher education for students. Two of these initiatives are the AccessUS Program and expanded eligibility for in-state tuition rates.

AccessUS Program

Southwestern Kansas is a sparsely populated rural area. Although the area is home to several community colleges, they are widely dispersed. The opportunities for students to take upper-division courses are very

limited. In an effort to increase access to higher education in the area, the 2003 legislature appropriated \$200,000 to assist with the implementation of AccessUS, which provides place-bound individuals in the southwestern portion of the state the opportunity to take upper-division courses. This program is often the only way these students can complete a degree. Six community colleges and three state universities now participate in the program.

Some courses are presented in the traditional face-to-face classroom (with the instructor driving from location to location). Others are delivered using distance-learning technology, such as interactive television or the Internet. State funding guarantees continuation of the course should the enrollment drop below the financial break-even point. For example, if the break-even point for a class is 10 students and the enrollment for that class drops to eight, the university is paid an amount equal to the tuition for two students.

Because the program is still relatively new, course offerings are fairly limited. Individual courses are available throughout the network, and two baccalaureate degrees are offered: a bachelor's degree in Technology Leadership through Pratt Community College and a bachelor's in General Studies in Business through Dodge City Community College. The universities, community colleges and the Board of Regents are examining the feasibility of offering additional degree programs, such as nursing.

Of the total of \$400,000 of state funding appropriated over two fiscal years, approximately \$14,000 has been transferred to universities to cover courses with low enrollments. To further increase access, the Board of Regents is considering using some of the remaining funds for need-based scholarships or for marketing the program. Currently, students must be enrolled full time to receive assistance from state scholarship programs. Although the funds are now available only to full-time students, the board is considering expanding financial

One student's story

Andrea is an architecture student at Kansas State University. She was born in Chihuahua, Mexico, but graduated from Wyandotte High School in Kansas City, Kan. Because Andrea is an undocumented immigrant, she would not have been eligible for in-state tuition without the 2004 legislation. The difference between in-state and out-of-state tuition for Fall 2004 was \$4,380, a difference that Andrea could not afford.

Andrea offers: "I consider the state of Kansas my home now because this is the place where I live in and the place where I am achieving my goals. Kansas, beyond being the place that has provided me with opportunities to have a higher education, is also the place where I have met awesome people and a community where I feel that I belong."

assistance to part-time students as well. Dodge City Community College has used private-sector funds to provide scholarships on a course-by-course basis and has increased student participation.

Expanding eligibility for in-state tuition rates

Kansas' demographic profile has changed dramatically in recent years. The Census Bureau has estimated that in the 1990s, Kansas had a net international migration of 28,233 people. However, nearly as many immigrants—25,497 people—moved to Kansas between 2000 and 2003 alone. According to the Census Bureau, foreign-born residents constituted 5 percent of the total population in 2000. The portion of the population born outside the United States has not been that high in Kansas since the 1920s. Many of the

children of recent immigrants were raised in Kansas and have no memory of living in another country, yet they did not qualify for in-state tuition rates because they were not U.S. citizens.

In 2004, legislators established criteria for determining students' eligibility for in-state tuition and fees at Kansas' postsecondary educational institutions. This legislation was not based on residency but on attendance and graduation from Kansas high schools.

An individual is eligible to pay in-state tuition if he or she meets the following criteria:

- Attended an accredited Kansas high school for three or more years.
- Graduated from an accredited Kansas high school or obtained a GED in Kansas.
- In the case of students who are without lawful immigration status or have legal, nonpermanent immigration status, have filed an affidavit stating that the person has applied to legalize his or her immigration status, or has filed for U.S. citizenship, or that the person's parents have filed such an application.

Because of this legislation, eligible undocumented immigrants pay in-state tuition rates rather than much higher out-of-state or international rates. For the Fall 2004 semester, 37 eligible individuals enrolled in postsecondary educational institutions. Of those, seven are enrolled at the state universities, and 30 are enrolled in community colleges.

Conclusion

As the economy continues to improve, legislators will continue to seek ways to provide access and affordability for students seeking higher education in Kansas. Some service-related scholarships, such as the Teacher Service Scholarship and those described in this

essay, have waiting lists; a joint legislative committee recommended additional funding to address this need, but budgetary constraints prevented an increase in appropriations in the 2005 session.

Kansas' history of addressing other higher education issues such as the recruitment and retention of medical professionals has fostered fruitful collaboration to meet students' and communities' needs. Those practices

have enabled the state to implement a variety of programs specifically designed to assist students with the cost of continuing their education. Cooperative efforts with other states, local entities and private businesses as well as between state agencies have helped reduce the cost of higher education for the students of Kansas. ■