



WEAC Region 8/WTCS

P.O. Box 293
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July 11, 2014

Wisconsin Joint Legislative Council Study Committee on Review of WTCS
Representative John Nygren, Chair
Room 309 East, State Capitol
P.O. Box 8953
Madison, WI 53708

Dear Members of the Wisconsin Joint Legislative Council Study Committee:

As faculty and staff in Wisconsin Technical Colleges, we are writing to express our deep concern regarding the proposal to move local administrative funding and control of Wisconsin Technical Colleges to the state. We believe this would be extremely detrimental for our colleges, our students, and for Wisconsin's economy and its citizens.

As faculty and staff who work in the technical colleges, we are daily witnesses to, as well as participants in, the colleges' immediate responsiveness to local employer and economic developmental needs. Changing the control and funding model would hinder the ability of individual technical colleges to maintain the immediate responsiveness we are currently able to provide. Currently, colleges can, and do, continually make program changes to address needs of local employers quickly and efficiently.

For instance, Waukesha County Technical College (WCTC) partnered with Lincoln Electric to provide more than \$250,000 worth of welding equipment to train students on the most up-to-date equipment available, resulting in highly trained workers that benefitted not only that company, but also the students and entire community. WCTC also recently developed, based on employer demand, both a technical diploma and an associate degree in Baking and Pastry and a technical diploma in HVAC (Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning).

Recently, Mid-State Technical College was able to swiftly respond to the demand for welders in the Stratford area by opening a welding lab in Marshfield to train students. Without this ability to respond quickly and with flexibility, an excellent local employer may have had to move elsewhere to find trained workers, in turn, hurting the business's profit margins, the local economy and its residents.

Similarly, Gateway Technical College faculty have developed short-term "boot camp" training programs that put students into high-demand jobs quickly. These, as well as countless other, program developments and rapid responses would not have been possible if the colleges were governed from the state level, due to the bureaucracy that is inevitable in a larger administrative model.

Additionally, we as faculty and staff interact directly with the local advisory committees that are an integral part of the current governance model. Working directly with these local advisory committees, comprised of local business leaders, enables us to provide relevant programming

and to place employees into local job positions. Ongoing, direct communication with these advisory committee members keeps us abreast of their current and future needs. Not only do these committee members advise us about the technical skills needed in today's workforce, but they also discuss the soft skill requirements for each program area. This advisory committee component of our current governance model is one of the cornerstones that keeps us relevant, up to date and connected to local business and industry needs.

The vast majority of students who attend a technical college become local employees and taxpayers, which has allowed students to obtain successful careers while employers grow profits. Again, as faculty and staff we witness these transitions and successes on a regular basis. According to WTCS graduate data, 84% of our employed graduates stay in Wisconsin, with 61% remaining in their local districts. We have witnessed that 9 out of 10 graduates get employed within six months of graduation, immediately earning, on average, \$36,000.

All of the above components are what has made the WTC System unique, needed, and an extremely successful asset for the State of Wisconsin. Rick Recktenwald, President of Walker Forge and Precision Thermal Processing, Inc., wrote to legislators in response to a bill introduced last fall to centralize control of the WTCS, "I have searched for any logical, measurable, financially efficient or academically enhancing reason for a bill of this type and, almost unbelievably, have not found a single one. Walker Forge and Precision Thermal Processing's experience with FVTC has been successful, and continues to be successful, because of its decentralized, personal approach to creating solutions for the many and varied education and training issues our business and employees face." As faculty and staff working in the technical colleges, we agree. Changing our current effective model would cripple the economic development of our regions and the state's ability to help students acquire the skills needed to get family-supporting jobs. At a time when continued economic recovery is so important, dismantling a prosperous system would further hurt Wisconsin's ability to recover to pre-recession levels.

In order to maintain the current successful technical college system that supports the needs of our students and local businesses, we urge your support for maintaining local control and funding of the technical colleges. Thank you for your time and consideration of our views and concerns on this matter.

Sincerely,



Kelly Soczka Kaiser, President WEAC Region 8/WTCS and Mid-State Technical College Faculty Association

Karla Clark, President, Blackhawk Technical College Educational Support Personnel
Jon Brutlag, President, Chippewa Valley Technical College Education Association
Todd Wilson, President, Fox Valley Technical College Educational Support Personnel
James Reinke, President, Fox Valley Technical College Faculty Association
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