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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Kansas Leadership Center and WSU Tech join national initiative to expand college access for Kansas students

Wichita, Kan. – The Kansas Leadership Center (KLC) and Wichita State University Campus of Applied Sciences and Technology (WSU Tech) have been selected to join the second cohort of Jobs for the Future's Increasing Dual Enrollment Access and Success (IDEAS) initiative, a national effort to expand access to college-level coursework for high school students. The two Wichita-based organizations are working together to design regional partnerships that increase equitable access to dual enrollment opportunities across Kansas.

IDEAS is a five-year, \$15 million initiative that launched in 2024 and is funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Education Innovation & Research program. The national program is designed to help more students participate in meaningful, credit-bearing college courses during high school.

"Dual enrollment can be a powerful starting point, but access alone is not enough," said Jena Roth, dean of high school partnerships and community outreach at WSU Tech. "Through this partnership, we can bring schools, colleges and communities together to identify barriers and build clearer pathways that help Kansas students turn college credit into progress toward a credential and career."

Research from the [What Works Clearinghouse \(WWC\)](#) shows that dual enrollment boosts academic achievement, increases college persistence and leads to higher credential completion rates. According to the Community College Research Center, more students are participating in dual enrollment than ever before. During the 2022-23 academic year, an estimated [2.5 million high school students](#) took at least one college course. Additionally, community colleges across the country are seeing a [rise in enrollment among students under age 18](#). However, [access to dual enrollment remains uneven](#). Lack of courses in rural areas, unexpected fees or textbook costs, and insufficient resources or support systems can limit access for some students.

Ultimately, this initiative is about ensuring more Kansas students, regardless of where they live or their family's income, have a clearer pathway to college and career success.

This partnership will help more Kansas students earn college credit while still in high school, reducing both the time and cost required to complete a degree after high school graduation.

The IDEAS project expands access to dual enrollment through a Hub model that aligns schools, colleges and communities around shared goals so more students graduate with momentum toward college and career. KLC and WSU Tech represent the Kansas hub, joining partners in Ohio, Tennessee, Arizona, Illinois and Texas.

“Expanding access to dual enrollment is a complex challenge that no one organization can solve alone,” said Kaye Monk-Morgan, president and CEO of the Kansas Leadership Center. “We’re honored to partner with WSU Tech to thoughtfully design and put systems in place to break down the barriers and make dual enrollment an accessible option for Kansas students.”

To help manage and support the partnership between KLC and WSU Tech, KLC hired Jayla Dennis as the IDEAS manager. Dennis brings firsthand experience helping first-generation and youth in foster care navigate college access, making her uniquely positioned to lead the initiative. She is a first-generation college graduate who graduated from Friends University. Before joining KLC in this role, she served as a college access advisor with Kansas Kids @ GEAR UP, a federally funded program that helps youth in foster care pursue postsecondary education.

“With her prior experience and as a first-generation college graduate, Jayla has seen how barriers can keep young students from achieving their dreams. She is the ideal person to manage this initiative and help implement the adapted Hub framework,” said Monk-Morgan.

KLC and WSU Tech are currently in the planning and discovery phase of the initiative. Over the coming months, partners will conduct site visits, assess current dual enrollment systems and identify opportunities to strengthen access across Kansas. The work will ultimately inform a shared vision and priorities for expanding equitable dual enrollment opportunities statewide.

[Learn more.](#)

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About the Kansas Leadership Center

The Kansas Leadership Center (KLC) is a first-of-its-kind nonprofit educational organization with a civic mission, national reputation and global reach. Founded in 2007 to foster civic leadership for stronger, healthier and more prosperous communities in Kansas and beyond, KLC receives core funding from the Kansas Health Foundation (a private, philanthropic organization). It partners with nonprofit organizations, government agencies, educational institutions, businesses and communities to build cultures that are healthy, productive and well-positioned to make measurable progress on daunting challenges and emergent opportunities. KLC Press publishes leadership books and The Journal, a nationally recognized, award-winning civic issues magazine.

For more than 19 years, KLC has built a strong and respected institution in Kansas designed to deliver leadership development and culture change at unparalleled scale. Now, organizations across the country

and around the world look to us to provide resources and consultation to support their own aspirations for mission-driven leadership education. Learn more at kansasleadershipcenter.org.

About WSU Tech

As Wichita State University Campus of Applied Sciences and Technology, WSU Tech stands at the forefront of modern technical education in Kansas, offering over 100 degree and certificate options. These programs cover critical fields such as aviation, health care, manufacturing, design, information technology, police science, culinary arts, business, and more. WSU Tech operates four campuses and serves as the managing partner of the National Center for Aviation Training (NCAT) in Wichita, KS—a city known for its high concentration of STEM jobs.

In 2018, Wichita State University, Kansas' urban public research university, affiliated with WSU Tech, enhancing the institution's student-centered focus and aligning with Wichita State's dedication to innovation and applied learning. This partnership has created a comprehensive educational environment that supports student achievement and meets the evolving needs of industries in the urban heart of Kansas and beyond.

Accredited by The Higher Learning Commission and as a Kansas Board of Regents institution, WSU Tech upholds high academic standards and equips students with the skills necessary for lifelong success and career readiness.

For more information on how WSU Tech shapes the future of technical education and contributes to the workforce in Kansas and beyond, please visit www.WSUTECH.edu.

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