

Kansas Embarks on Massive Tech-ed



Kansas colleges align postsecondary technical education across the state.



A statewide curriculum project is underway in Kansas that will align all postsecondary technical education courses and programs across the state to the needs of business and industry. The initiative not only involves close collaboration among representatives from business and industry and the 26 Kansas technical and community colleges, it includes the creation of a new centralized Web site to store aligned courses and programs.

Accessing the newly aligned programs is quick and easy. Instructors simply download the most current curriculum documents from a central repository – the Kansas CurriculumBank Web site (<http://kansas.curriculumbank.org>).

Goals of Alignment

Ultimately, by aligning technical education courses and programs, this initiative of the Kansas Postsecondary Technical Education Authority (TEA) and the Kansas Board of Regents (KBOR) will aid students in navigating their educational course of study and ensure program graduates master the same set of core skills required by business and industry, no matter where a given course or program is delivered in the state.

Curriculum Alignment

“We currently have about 530 programs under 160 different classifications of instructional program (CIP code,” says Rita Johnson, KBOR Senior Director for Workforce Innovation. “When the alignment is complete, all like postsecondary technical education programs in Kansas will have the same CIP codes with consistent exit points, program lengths and stackable industry-based credentials.”

All the while, instructors retain academic freedom. Teachers not only deliver course material as they wish, they develop their own unique lesson plans, learning activities and assessment tasks, according to Johnson.

So far, Kansas has completed alignment of five programs – Practical Nurse, Carpentry, Auto Technology, Welding and Auto Collision Repair. Twelve more are in one phase of the process or another. “As one program moves off the alignment list, another is added,” says Johnson.

Phases in Program Alignment

The alignment process includes five phases, she maintains, and key to the success of each, is communication and collaboration.

Phase 1: research and standards validation

Phase 2: program and course development

Phase 3: approval of new program curriculum and implementation

Phase 4: implementation

Phase 5: standards revision and program review

Determining the Needs of Business and Industry

The first step in the process – research and standards validation – serves to identify the skills (competencies) needed by a given industry, says Johnson. An advisory committee of business and industry experts from across Kansas is selected for each program undergoing alignment. Together, the members determine the

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A New Web Site – A Central Repository for Storing Aligned Curriculum



To facilitate communication during the alignment process, and to ensure final aligned curriculum is quickly accessible to faculty across Kansas, the KBOR launched the new Kansas CurriculumBank Web site (<http://kansas.curriculumbank.org>). The site, developed by WIDS and owned by KBOR, not only allows users to work on developing curriculum projects online, it stores all final curriculum for instructor download in either MS Word or WIDS format. Wisconsin uses a similar Web site in the same manner. Like Kansas, the Wisconsin Technical College System stores all statewide aligned courses and programs on its own CurriculumBank site (curriculumbank.org).

Not only is the site used to store the new curricula as it is developed, it is used for alignment projects in progress and for the dissemination of information. With the use of discussion forums on the site, some of the preparation for the collaborative work to align curriculum can be done online. It allows faculty to collaborate online, rather than always having to meet face-to-face away from the classroom.

Kansas Technical Education Alignment Specifics

What will be Aligned in a Technical Education Program?

- Program length – maximum total credit hours
- Program Core courses – within the core, the following are aligned:
 - Course titles
 - Course credit hours – credit hours will be used instead of contact hours
 - Course descriptions
 - Competencies & performance standards
 - Pre-requisites and co-requisites (if there are any)
- Exit Assessment – a national certification is encouraged

What will Not be Aligned in a Technical Education Program?

- Configuration of credit hours (lecture/lab) may vary to meet the needs of the individual colleges as long as the competencies are met and the credit value is the same
- Delivery modes (online, face-to-face, 8 week sessions, 16 week sessions)
- Course order (as long as the college meets the pre-requisites and co-requisites designed by the alignment team, individual colleges may choose to offer the courses in a different order)
- Learning activities, assessment activities, and learning objectives
- Textbooks
- Course numbers
- Order of addressing competencies within a course
- General education courses
- Institutional flexibility course

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skills graduates must master to benefit business and industry in a given field. As part of this process, national and state standards, and/or industry certifications and credentials are also identified. “We need to know what industry certifications benefit students and employers the most,” says Johnson. “Once the competencies for a given program are identified by the state-wide advisory group, those competencies are then reviewed by each institution’s local advisory group.”

Building the Curriculum

It is from these identified competencies that a resulting program curriculum is created. Phase 2 – program and course development – begins with the collection of faculty representatives from each of the 26 technical and community colleges currently delivering the program undergoing the alignment process. This faculty group works together to develop the new program curriculum with a facilitator/consultant from WIDS. WIDS Consultant Kim Vosicky has facilitated the curriculum development process for several of the programs in Kansas thus far. “WIDS provides us with an unbiased, external facilitator who guides faculty in a collaborative effort,” says Johnson.

During this phase, instructors share ideas and best practices from their own experiences, which help to hone the new program curriculum, according to Vosicky. “The faculty are passionate about what they teach and care about their programs and student learning,” she says. “It’s WIDS’ job to capture from faculty what the students need to be able to do upon exiting a program. Our instructional design model, process and tools allow a WIDS consultant to work side-by-side with these subject-matter experts – making alignment truly a collaborative effort.”

As the group moves along, Vosicky organizes and documents the curriculum using WIDS Software.

Approving the Curriculum

The final curriculum must then be reviewed and approved by the TEA and the KBOR during phase 3 – approval of new program curriculum and implementation. Once approved, institutions are given a period of time to make the necessary local curriculum adjustments as well as revise institutional/course catalogs and advising/enrollment processes, according to Johnson.

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Using the Curriculum

Thus begins implementation – phase 4. All new programs are then stored on the state’s data base – Kansas CurriculumBank – and disseminated to all technical and community colleges. All final curriculum documents are available from the site in either WIDS or MS Word. While several Kansas institutions use WIDS Software to design new curriculum, some don’t. That’s why both MS Word and WIDS files are available for download. During implementation, the institutions begin using the curricula to teach students – and all the while – instructors document any needed future revisions.

A Year Later – Revision

During the final alignment phase one year following implementation – standards revision and program review – the statewide faculty committees review the programs again. Any program issues are identified and improvement recommendations are made to the TEA, Program and Curriculum Committee and state staff. Finally, those changes are reviewed and approved by TEA. And, since no course or program should remain static, program revisions continue on a regular program review cycle, according to Johnson.

To find out more about the Kansas alignment, visit <http://kansas.curriculumbank.org>. To find out more about WIDS, visit www.wids.org.

Instant Webinar

Don’t have time to sit-in on one of our scheduled webinars? Learn about WIDS immediately by viewing a pre-recorded Webinar session. Visit www.wids.org and click on “View a recorded webinar” from the home page.

Webinar Schedule

Discover the basic components of designing effective performance-based curriculum. Explore WIDS Software firsthand and view its features. Register at www.wids.org

- Thu, Oct 15, 2009, 1 - 2:00 PM
- Fri, Oct 23, 2009, 10 - 11:00 AM
- Tues, Nov 10, 2009, 9 - 10:00 AM



Leah Osborn, WIDS Learning Design Consultant, facilitates a Program Design workshop this past June.