Kansas Depends on Higher Education

To the editor,

The economic prosperity of Kansas depends on the education of its workers and the fostering of new industries that create jobs. That’s why we encourage legislators to look closely at how investing in higher education benefits Kansans and creates long-term growth. Investing now in education and research will ensure a bright future for all Kansas.

Just ask the nearly 309,000 University of Kansas, Wichita State University and Kansas State University alumni who live in Kansas and are benefiting from college degrees. College graduates are much less likely to be unemployed than people with only high school diplomas and will earn an estimated $450,000 more during their careers. When they spend those earnings, they help create jobs in their communities.

As a result, Kansans with college degrees aren’t the only ones benefiting from our state’s strong public research universities. Everyone feels the impact of our research and teaching — from the neighborhood pharmacy to the family dinner table.

For example, KU’s medical and pharmacy schools educate health professionals who care for Kansans and help them live longer, healthier lives. K-State’s veterinary medicine college educates veterinarians who not only care for family pets but also look after the state’s $6.4 billion cattle industry. Wichita State’s programs in health professions, engineering and business fuel the need for the major business sectors in the state.

K-State, Wichita State and KU also enhance the lives of people across the country. K-State will be home to the Department of Homeland Security’s National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility, ensuring that all Americans have access to safe food. Wichita State is a full partner in translating aviation technology in health care through the Center of Innovation for Biomaterials in Orthopaedic Research. KU will apply for National Cancer Institute designation in Kansas City that will bring new treatments to cancer patients in their own communities.

The research we conduct on everything from biofuels to special education drives economic growth and enhances our quality of life. Researchers from the state’s three research universities brought more than $445 million in outside funding to Kansas last year, creating jobs and spurring growth. And that’s even before you consider the new companies created as a result of the research conducted at our universities.

We understand times are tough in Topeka. But the long-term prosperity of our state depends on the long-term success of our research universities. Gov. Sam Brownback understands this, which is why he made continued support for Kansas universities a central part of his budget proposal.

We believe the governor’s proposal was a step in the right direction and we will continue to work closely with him and with legislators to create collaborative partnerships that benefit all Kansans.

Working not as Jayhawks, Shockers or Wildcats but as Kansans, we can lay the foundation for prosperity, not just at our universities, but throughout the entire state. Please ask your legislators to continue to support higher education.

Respectfully,

Bernadette Gray-Little,
Chancellor
University of Kansas

Donald L. Beegs,
President
Wichita State University

Kirk H. Schulz,
President
Kansas State University