WSU, school districts discuss college and career readiness
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In response to the Kansas Board of Regents strategic plan for Kansas’ higher education system, Foresight 2020, faculty and staff from Wichita State University and local school districts met earlier this month to discuss student preparation for college.

The first goal of Foresight 2020 requires all higher education institutions to have discussions with local schools regarding gaps between preK-12 completion and higher education preparation expectations. In other words, said Richard Muma, the WSU associate provost who planned the meeting, "How can both the preK-12 and the higher education systems work together to assure college and career readiness."

WSU Interim Provost Keith Pickus convened the meeting on campus that included WSU faculty and administrators from the departments of math and English in the Fairmount College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and various other departments in the College of Education, as well as superintendents, principals and faculty from the Andover, Derby, Goddard, Haysville, Maize, Valley Center and Wichita school districts.

Pickus emphasized the importance of collaborative relationships between universities and school districts in order for each to have a better understanding of student needs as they move through the education pipeline.

"We can and should continue to learn from each other about all of our students," Pickus said.

John Burke, Haysville superintendent, added, "This is a great opportunity for WSU administrators and area school administrators to collaborate to create a more seamless transition for students to successfully move from high school to college."

"Because increased skills in math and literacy are being required of students today in order to meet the demands for 21st century jobs, this kind of partnership will be of interest to many parents and employers and others in the broader community," said Sharon Iorio, dean of the College of Education. "The partnership will identify the gaps in math/literacy learning of students that keep some students from doing well in university coursework."

According to meeting facilitator Jim Granada, WSU assistant professor in curriculum and instruction and former administrator in the Austin Independent School District who has studied the issue of college readiness: "Working through the learning gaps together has the opportunity to prepare many more students for post-secondary learning whether that means a university degree or some other form of career training."

"This kind of partnership with a large number of the area schools and WSU is not uncommon across the U.S., but is a new idea for Kansas that seems right for the times," Iorio said.

"Going forward, it is hoped that regular meetings will occur with concrete plans emerging that lead to a college and career ready student pipeline," Pickus said.