



May 18, 2022

The Honorable Zora Mulligan  
Commissioner  
Missouri Department of Higher Education & Workforce Development  
301 W. High Street  
P.O. Box 1469  
Jefferson City, MO 65102-1469

Re: SEMO Community College Partnerships

Dear Commissioner Mulligan,

I am in receipt of your May 18, 2022 email regarding material the Department prepared in response to a request from a CBHE member that asked for background about the relationship between Lincoln University and State Fair Community College. At the end of the material, the Department prepared a summary chart providing an “Overview of Current Community College/Public University Partnerships.” It was very disappointing that there was no mention of SEMO’s many partnerships on this chart. Whether intentional or not, the failure to include SEMO gives the appearance that the University does not, and is not willing, to partner with community colleges. As evidenced by the below, SEMO has many partnerships with community colleges, and we are significantly invested in these types of relationships. It is unfortunate that the Department failed to make note of these.

1. **SEMO Poplar Bluff** that allows a student the opportunity to seek a college degree or take classes in Poplar Bluff, MO. A partnership with Three Rivers College, SEMO operates on TRC’s campus. There is an onsite academic adviser to help student’s plan coursework. SEMO Poplar Bluff has additional admission options, reduced rates on lower-level courses, and scholarship opportunities. A student at SEMO Poplar Bluff can pursue 17 programs and majors in areas of study such as agriculture, education and business. Additional information on SEMO Poplar Bluff can be found here, <https://semo.edu/about/campuses/poplar-bluff.html>. Revenue-sharing is not part of this partnership; however, SEMO pays for all staff in Poplar Bluff and pays an annual fee to TRC for use of its facilities.
2. **Articulation Agreements** for associate degree completers to move on to a bachelor’s degree. Specific to MAC, SEMO and MAC announced new transfer pathways/articulation agreements in nearly 20 areas of study in July 2021. SEMO has articulation agreements with many community colleges including, but not limited, to: Mineral Area College, Three Rivers College, St. Charles Community College, and St. Louis Community College. Additional information on SEMO’s articulation agreements

can be found here, <https://semo.edu/student-support/academic-support/registrar/transfer-info.html>.

3. **Degree Works Transfer Equivalency** allows a student to use SEMO's online degree audit system to list their transfer coursework into the major of their choice and track their degree at Southeast.
4. **Transfer Course Equivalencies** allows a student to use SEMO's online course equivalency system to see how their colleges courses will transfer to SEMO.
5. **Transfer Mentor Program** allows a community college student at a partner institution to track their degree program at SEMO from their very first semester in college. It provides the student access to SEMO's Degree Works system and authorizes the community college and SEMO to share transcripts to better track and facilitate transfer. In addition to access to SEMO's web-based degree management system to plan their Bachelor's Degree, participating students have access to an academic adviser at SEMO. Participating Transfer Mentor Program schools in Missouri include Jefferson College, Mineral Area College, and Three Rivers College. Additional information on the Transfer Mentor Partnership can be found here, <https://semo.edu/admissions/requirements/transfer-mentor.html>.

If you, your staff, or members of the CBHE have any questions, or would like additional information on anything included above, please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Sincerely,



Carlos Vargas  
University President

cc: Coordinating Board for Higher Education  
SEMO Board of Governors

May 18, 2022

Technical College in Southeast Missouri

My name is Charlie Glueck. I have been in the tire and automotive business at Jackson Tire Center for 40 years plus.

In 2015, as president of the Jackson Area Chamber of Commerce, I was on a mission to find out the needs of local business and industry. Without a doubt it was the need for a technical workforce.

Having served 10 years on an advisory board at State Technical College in Linn, Missouri, I knew exactly what they were talking about. Technology continues to pass us by.

Later in 2015, the Jackson Chamber chartered a bus and escorted 48 folks to tour Linn State. This was a cross section of high school superintendents, counselors, teachers and business and industry people. The tour did give the visitors the WOW affect. That afternoon we traveled to Jefferson City and presented to the few legislators that cared to hear our story. Very disappointing.

The next step was a regional meeting held at the Cape Career and Technology Center that included many local business/industry folks as well as representatives from Southeast Missouri State, Three Rivers Community College, Mineral Area Community College and Linn State.

The intent of this meeting was to share examples of the technology that continues to move faster than we can teach. Also, to share our expressed need in Southeast Missouri for college level technical training. And finally, to solicit support from colleges that are supposed to service this region. Here we are seven years later with no support.

What's interesting is that SEMO, Three Rivers and Mineral Area continued to expand their campuses. SEMO had regional campuses in Kennett, Malden and Sikeston. Three Rivers occupied locations in Dexter, Kennett, Malden, Piedmont, Sikeston, Cape Girardeau and Willow Springs. Mineral Area had additional locations in Arcadia Valley, Farmington, Fredericktown, Perryville, Potosi and Winona.

Our state legislators and department of education allowed this to happen without consideration for the need for technical training. It's easy to justify when you need a teacher, desk and a book. Technical schools are expensive and require a monetary commitment no one wants to tackle. It will require major support.

Doing further reading I discovered, per capita, the state of Missouri has well above the needs of four-year colleges. What's alarming is that we have only ONE state technical college.

During my years of business, I learned that that from time to time you have to adjust your business plan to meet the needs of your customers. Obviously, our State Department of Education and our Legislators are not willing to make that commitment.

Our state leaders talk about attracting business and industry with high paying jobs. We are falling short in preparing a technically trained workforce.

Other articles have addressed the political football being kicked around for the past 10 years with the colleges involved in this endeavor. It saddens me to say that the people paying the price for the selfish motives are our young people who desire to pursue technical careers.

Respectfully submitted;

Charlie Glueck/Jackson Tire Center



May 18, 2022

Dr. Carlos Vargas  
President  
Southeast Missouri State University  
One University Plaza, MS 3300  
Cape Girardeau, Missouri 63701

Dear Dr. Vargas:

I am writing to express my concerns about your educational leadership for the Southeast Missouri area. When you arrived at Southeast Missouri State University (SEMO), I was very encouraged by your background in education and thought you would be a breath of fresh air when it came to concern for the training and education of open enrollment students in our region. However, recent decisions and actions on your part and that of the University have become a matter of great concern for myself and other business leaders in our community. In my view, those decisions are harmful for our community and will eventually result in damage to the University itself. Please let me take a moment to explain to you, my concerns.

In the 1990s, SEMO made a choice to become moderately selective in its enrollment. As you are aware, what that did was directly reduce the opportunity for open enrollment students to gain access to the University and Cape Girardeau was uniquely faced with a significant problem since we did not have a community/technical college that could accept open enrollment students. The Cape Girardeau School District attempted to fill that gap by providing the Career and Technology Center, at significant financial costs to the school district, itself and later expanded that effort to support the Cape College Center.

It is my understanding that:

1. In the more than 10 years of the existence of the Cape College Center, SEMO failed to provide a single technical program to enhance course offerings. Instead, they, along with Three Rivers Community College, elected to harvest the easy money, general education funds, without reinvesting them back into the Cape College Center for new programs.
2. When efforts were developed by the Committee for Affordable Education to provide a 13<sup>th</sup> community college so that open enrollment students could better access technical training, you and your leadership team chose to oppose the effort and prevent its acceptance.

3. The Career and Technology Center, operated by the Cape Girardeau school system at a cost of more than \$1.5 million a year, provided technical training for the dozen or so sending high schools from the region and to alleviate that cost, the school district was to receive \$5 million last year to assist with the expenses at the Career and Technology Center. However, it is my understanding that you sent the retiring Chamber of Commerce executive, John Mehner, to visit with the chair of higher education to see that those funds were eliminated from the state budget, even though Perryville and Farmington received their equal amounts to service their areas.
4. This year, when our state legislators attempted to allocate \$10.5 million for the Career and Technology Center, you chose to inform Representative Rob Vescovo of your dissatisfaction with this investment and he personally, as a former SEMO graduate, saw that it was removed from this year's budget.

It is my view, Dr. Vargas, you could have taken the high road and benefitted both the University and the open enrollment students by working cooperatively with the Committee for Affordable Education to solve this problem. You could certainly have followed the outstanding example of Missouri State, who developed a good relationship with Ozark Technical College to the benefit of their university and the open enrollment students of Springfield, or you could have followed the example of Central Missouri State University and Metropolitan Technical College in Kansas City who developed an outstanding program at Lee Summit High School to benefit such students.

Some of the decisions that the University has made over the years has resulted in substantial additional costs for the businesses in our community. Those decisions could have been alleviated by meeting with business leaders in our community and working to address their needs. Let me give you an example on how SEMO's decision making has affected the largest business in our community.

Several years back the University decided that they wanted to develop a school for performing arts and in doing so ignored the healthcare industry in our community and its needs. SEMO capped the number of nursing students which forced Southeast Hospital to develop a separate nursing and allied health school to answer their need for trained workers. Needless to say, that school was unable to benefit its students by using A+ Scholarship funds which would have substantially reduced the cost of training nursing and allied health workers.



Dr. Carlos Vargas  
Southeast Missouri State University

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Let me share with you the results of that decision on the healthcare industry in our community. Last year alone, Southeast Hospital spent more than \$16 million in agency nursing fees to cope with the nursing shortage that we face and no doubt, St. Francis paid a comparable amount. All of these costs are then charged to the businesses in the Cape Girardeau region as they must pay the difference in nursing and allied health training costs. It is high time that you and your Board of Governors see the effects of the decisions you have made and the lack of consideration that you have given to the business community in our area.

It is my personal feeling that the University would benefit from a good, strong community college as graduates seek higher credentials in their training. Your failure to do so has resulted in many of our younger people leaving the area and moving to areas where they can utilize credentials that are not needed in Cape Girardeau.

I look forward to hearing your response and hopefully a change of direction by the University to better meet the needs of our region and its businesses.

Sincerely,

Earl H. Norman  
Chairman & CEO