



Branstad signs technical education bill at Waterloo community college

Governor says bill will make sure graduates 'genuinely ready' for college or careers



Iowa Gov. Terry Branstad signs House File 2392, an act providing academic, career guidance, career and technical education programs at Hawkeye Community College on Thursday in Waterloo. (MATTHEW PUTNEY/WATERLOO COURIER)

By Christinia Crippes, Waterloo-Cedar Falls Courier

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WATERLOO — Iowa Gov. Terry Branstad signed into law Thursday legislation aimed at

modernizing career technical education throughout the state.

“It’s an honor for me to be able to sign House File 2392, which makes sweeping changes to modernize our career technical education and provide more equitable access across Iowa for students from seventh through 12th,” Branstad said during the signing ceremony at Hawkeye Community College. “This legislation provides more opportunities for students to explore and prepare for jobs of today and tomorrow.”

Branstad said the legislation is aimed at making sure students graduate “genuinely ready” for college or career training. It also helps with the Future Ready Iowa goal of ensuring 70 percent of Iowa’s workforce have education or training beyond high school by 2025.

“We just celebrated the 50th anniversary of the creation of the community colleges and I think this is going to be a new chapter, and a new chapter that really integrates the community colleges more effectively,” Branstad said, adding the foundation had already been laid for community colleges to work with K-12 education and business and industry.

More than 200 people turned out, representing those education and industry stakeholders, to the brief event at Hawkeye’s Tama Hall.

Iowa Sen. Brian Schoenjahn, D-Arlington, said the location for the event was ideal, and noted the legislation passed with unanimous support after a two-year effort by a task force to craft a bill that would provide a framework for a more coordinated education effort.

“It is very few times that a bill sails through the Iowa Legislature without a single no vote. That’s amazing,” said Schoenjahn, who was on the task force and chairs the education appropriations subcommittee.

Branstad said the legislation makes three major changes:

- It creates a locally-driven approach to helping students develop career and academic plans starting in eighth grade, with an emphasis on work-based training;
- It establishes regional partnerships to help schools provide more “high-quality, cost-effective” secondary career technical education; and
- It expands the focus of career technical education to six new areas: agriculture, food and natural resources; arts, communication and information systems; applied sciences technology, engineering and manufacturing; business, marketing and management; health sciences; and human services.

Branstad, who had another event scheduled Thursday morning at TechWorks, chose to sign the bill at Hawkeye in part because it fit best into his schedule but also because of the important role that community colleges will play in implementing the legislation.

He praised Iowa’s community college for being a national leader in collaborating with other educational institutions, particularly on its dual-enrollment programs that allow high school students to earn community college credits.

Jane Bradley, vice president of academic affairs at Hawkeye Community College, said the legislation will help expand career education opportunities to students throughout the 10 counties it serves, particularly in the nine rural counties.

“I think it’s great for the state, for education — secondary and higher education,” Bradley said. “Things are in place, but this bill supports continuing those efforts, and the value of those efforts, so that’s exciting.”

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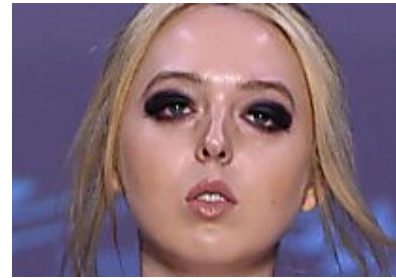
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