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Extension Granted In DCCC Lawsuit

Trustees for Dodge City Community College will have to wait another 10 days to learn how the Kansas Board of Regents plans to respond to a lawsuit the college filed recently.

Dodge joined Pratt and Cowley Community Colleges in the case, which asks the Shawnee District Court to order the regents to fund specific vo-tech classes at the same level as that provided to the rest of the community colleges in the state. The three schools are also asking for both past and future compensatory damages, although the plaintiff's plea didn't specify a dollar amount.

Kansas law requires the regents to respond to the lawsuit within 20 days — and that deadline is about to run out. But, in effect, the board did respond when the Kansas attorney general's office filed the extension request.

“Basically, the attorney general just made what is called an entry of appearance and obtained a 10-day extension,” said Dodge City's David Rebein, one of the lead attorneys for the colleges. “It's officially called a 10-day clerk's extension, and it's always granted when requested, just as a matter of course — especially in cases as complex as this one is.”

The lawsuit has been simmering for years and is rooted, for DCCC at least, in the college's shared roots with the Southwest Kansas Area Technical Vocational School. As an incentive to encourage community colleges to merge with vo-tech schools, which were funded by K-12 districts, the regents funded the colleges twice as much for every student enrolled in those vo-tech classes that had been previously been paid for by districts. The additional monies also reflected a recognition on the part of the regents of the higher cost of vo-tech classes requiring specialized equipment and tools, rather than the textbooks and computer software used to teach other kinds of classes.

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