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Senate

WISCONSIN TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Mr. KOHL. Mr. President, I am honored to have the opportunity to congratulate the Wisconsin Technical College System on their centennial celebration marking 100 years of contributing to my State and our Nation.

The early 1900s brought the Industrial Revolution and marked the onset of what would ultimately become a pivotal time in our Nation's history. In Wisconsin, our paper, shipbuilding and steel industries were poised for growth and required workers who were highly skilled and educated in these burgeoning trades.

It was this critical need that inspired one of Wisconsin's foremost educational pioneers, Dr. Charles McCarthy, the first director of what is now known as the Legislative Reference Bureau, to suggest a new model of education for Wisconsin. Dr. McCarthy's idea was based on the belief that, for many in Wisconsin, higher education could be obtained through a new model of learning. This model of learning would not only assist in meeting the new workforce demands of the Industrial Revolution, but would also provide expanded access for all residents to a higher level of education. In 1911, my home State of Wisconsin became the first State to establish a system of support for technical, vocational and adult education.

What ensued in the following decades through the first World War and the Great Depression emphasized the importance of vocational skills training and propelled the growth of the technical system. By the time that World War II began, Wisconsin's Technical College System had garnered a national reputation for excellence, prompting the Federal Government to allocate over \$4.6 billion into the State to aid the war effort. By the 1960s, the success and value of the system had been firmly established and the State legislature mandated that vocational districts be established throughout Wisconsin by 1970.

What began with an idea more than a century ago, the Wisconsin Technical College System has continued to set the standard for our Nation. The system currently serves 400,000 students on 47 campuses every year, helping to shape the future of our State and prepare the workers for tomorrow. Even in these difficult economic times, access to high quality education for all people remains crucial in ensuring that not only Wisconsin but the Nation, moves forward. I am very proud to recognize the Wisconsin Technical College System on its centennial celebration and for all it has done for the State of Wisconsin and its citizens.