Student News

5 local women named to KU sororities

Sororities at the University of Kansas pledged 567 women during fall formal recruitment, the KU Panhellenic Association has announced.

The number represents an increase from 2006 fall recruitment when 550 students affiliated with sororities.

Students from Wyandotte County include:

- Edwardsville: Margaret Caylan Hackney, daughter of Shelly Hackney, Pre-Medicine, Freshman, Alpha Gamma Delta; Bonner Springs High School.
- Kansas City, Kan.: Emily Erin Leet, daughter of Lauren and David Leet, Communication Studies, Freshman Alpha Chi Omega; Bishop Miege High School.
- Kansas City, Kan.: Marissa Fern Smith, daughter of Diane and Gary Smith, Biology, Freshman, Alpha Chi Omega; Piper High School.
- Kansas City, Kan.: Andrea R. Sutter, daughter of Dennis and Susan Sutter, Biology, Freshman, Kappa Delta, Piper High School.
- Kansas City, Kan.: Chelsea Elizabeth Theno, daughter of Kurt and Elizabeth Theno, English, Freshman, Delta Gamma; Piper High School.

More than 750 women took part in recruitment, and all 13 of KU's Panhellenic Association sororities added new members, said Laura Bauer, program director for Fraternity and Sorority Life. Membership bids were extended to women who completed the recruitment process.

Bauer said this year the Panhellenic Association implemented an online recruitment tool, Campus Director, which allowed women to create an account and register online for recruitment. The new system also allowed the recruitment counselors and sorority chapters to perform all of their data entry and new member updates online.

Sororities that are part of KU's Panhellenic Association are Alpha Chi Omega, Alpha Delta Pi, Alpha Gamma Delta, Chi Omega, Delta Delta Delta, Delta Gamma, Gamma Phi Beta, Kappa Alpha Theta, Kappa Delta, Kappa Kappa Gamma, Pi Beta Phi, Sigma Delta Tau and Sigma Kappa.
KHPA: A year of accomplishments and some setbacks

Responsibilities numerous for newly created agency

By Mike Shields and Jim McLean
KANSAS HEALTH INSTITUTE
NEWS SERVICE

In the history of Kansas government, there has never been anything quite like the Kansas Health Policy Authority, which just finished its first year with a few setbacks, a string of accomplishments and the job of delivering by Nov. 1 a major health reform plan for the Legislature’s consideration.

It is a quasi-independent, mega-agency invented in 2005 by Republican legislative leaders eager to trump a Democratic governor’s executive order.

Its birthing, some witnesses say, was entirely political. But now, the COMING UP

Tuesday: Kansas Health Policy Authority sets example with new state employee health program.

Same governor and legislators who bought over its creation before the 2006 elections praise the agency and say its strength is that it will rise above politics and produce sound health policy.

“The story that was never reported is that it was an independent agency that takes a number of programs and lollars and puts them out of direct control of the executive branch,” said University of Kansas political scientist

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Kansas Health Policy Authority executive director Marcla Nielsen testifies before the Joint Committee on Health Policy Oversight in Topeka. The KHPA recently finished its first year as an independent agency overseeing Kansas health issues.
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Burdett Loomis, who worked as an aide to Gov. Kathleen Sebelius when the agency was created.

"As a political scientist and academician I want government to be accountable," he said. "If you don't like a governor, you throw them out of office. But with the health authority, who do you hold accountable?"

The authority is run by executive director Marcia Nielsen, who answers to a board of nine voting members appointed by the governor and legislative leaders. It also has six nonvoting members made up of various cabinet agency chiefs and the state health director.

Bob Day, now running an institution for the developmentally disabled in Maryland, managed the agency's short-lived predecessor, the Governor's Office of Health Planning and Finance, which became the Division of Health Policy. He and the governor fought the legislation creating the health policy authority.

"I think she was concerned about it being a residential entity that would control 20 percent to 25 percent of the state budget outside of the control of the executive branch," Day said. "What that meant was that it was under the control of the Legislature. And to be honest, I think that was the intent. I think it is an issue."

The governor's executive order had a less ambitious goal for the agency. It foresaw a department, directly answerable to the governor, made strong mostly by the buying power it would have in the health care market. The dollar clout of the state's Medicaid program and its employees' health benefit plan is about $2.5 billion a year. The executive order also had the advantage of moving Medicaid out of the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services at a time when the program was under the scrutiny of federal auditors who found the state had misspent millions of dollars in federal aid.

But legislators went beyond the governor's plan, creating an agency that had not only the buying clout, but also nominal independence and a wider mandate to shape and implement policy. For example, the enabling legislation also charged the agency with the lofty goal of making Kansans healthier. Policymakers say that calls for nothing less than "a culture change."

All happy for now

Whatever misgivings the governor had about the agency apparently have eased now that it is up and running.

"The make-up and function of the KHPA closely follows the governor's initial executive order in October of 2003," said Nicole Corcoran, the governor's spokeswoman. "More importantly, the members of the KHPA Board and the KHPA staff have reached across party lines, reached out to community and business leaders, and truly formed a consensus throughout the state to improve the health care system."

House Speaker Melvin Neufeld, the Ingalls Republican who with Sen. Jim Barnett, R-Emporia, was instrumental in creating the agency, said he also is generally pleased with the agency's one-year track record.

The agency, he said, had to be given sweeping responsibilities.

"If you're going to go with the vision and change the system, you cannot get caught up in the minutiae of arguing details in a Medicaid plan, subsidizing private insurance premiums or whatever," Neufeld said. "Medicaid and the state employee plan are subsets. That's not the real change. When you're changing the culture I don't think there is a timeline so much as there are ah-ha moments when people who didn't get it before, get it."

Barnett said the agency's relationships with legislators could grow more complicated once it puts final touches on the major health reform proposals it is scheduled to deliver Nov. 1.

Difficulty 9.5

The agency was asked to assume day-to-day management of programs that provide health care services to about 340,000 Kansans while implementing and crafting a host of reforms and "changing the culture."

Perhaps the closest thing in Kansas history to what happened in the health policy authority's first year was in 1973-74 after then Gov. Robert Docking signed an executive order creating the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services. Before SRS, welfare services were the responsibility of each Kansas county.

Robert Harder was the first secretary of SRS and oversaw that reorganization. Now 78, he is a semi-retired advocate for the poor but still a close observer of government who has had some dealings with the health policy authority.

"On a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being the toughest, this is 9.5," Harder said of the task handed to the health policy authority. "One job was to knit together staff from several different agencies and get them pulling together. Then they were expected to pull programs together and view them in some sort of united comprehensive way ... the fourth major task was to begin designing some type of health-care reform that is unique and responsive to conditions in Kansas. It has a much heavier responsibility than any previous agency."

Nielsen, the health policy authority's executive director, said she already sees one difference in the way her agency operates.

"The first difference, the one easiest to see, is the culture that's been created at KHPA," she said. "By that I mean a culture of transparency and openness that the board feels very strongly about."

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