University investigating mailing of records

TOPEKA — Records discarded at the University of Kansas were mailed anonymously to three newspapers, prompting a campus investigation Wednesday. It was the second report in two months of such a breach of students' privacy.

The records included what appeared to be graded exams, job applications, change-of-grade forms, class rosters, seating charts and copies of health insurance cards and immigration forms, according to editors at the newspapers. Some of the documents contained credit card numbers, Social Security numbers and student identification numbers, they said.

The records were mailed in manila envelopes, with a letter in each packet. Each letter said the papers had come from the university’s math department or its recycling center. The letter’s writers claimed to be former math teaching assistants or current employees of the recycling center, and they were critical of how the math department handled its records.

“Our No. 1 concern is protecting these individuals from any compounded exposure and launching an investigation,” university spokeswoman Lynn Bretz said.

Bretz also issued a statement asking news organizations that had received the documents to return them. She said doing so would protect patients' privacy and allow the university to contact students whose records were mailed. Also, she said the university needed the documents as evidence in its investigation.

In July, The University Daily Kansan, the campus newspaper, reported that documents were left in vacant offices in Wescoe Hall, which was being renovated. The documents included graded exams, student essays and schedule-changing forms. Earlier this month, university officials announced a new program to improve the protection of private information.
Roberts announces $3.4M grant to WyCo

By NICK SLOAN
Kansan Staff Writer

U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts (R-Kan.) presented a surprise to students and staff at Bryant Preschool in the Quindaro neighborhood of Kansas City, Kan., on Friday.

Roberts, along with U.S. Deputy Secretary of Education Raymond Simon and University of Kansas Chancellor Robert Hemenway, presented a $3.4 million grant that will benefit the Wyandotte County Early Reading program.

The grant, in partnership with KU, aims to improve language and early literacy skills of early childhood students in Wyandotte County.

Roberts said the grant would help aid Wyandotte County Early Reading First, a program formed as a collaboration between the Juniper Gardens Children’s Project, Project EAGLE at the University of Kansas Medical Center, the Kansas City, Kan., Economic Opportunity Foundation Head Start and El Centro Academy for Children.

“This grant will bring desired and needed preschool dollars for

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Wyandotte County," Roberts said. "No matter what students want to do, you have to learn how to read and read well. Programs like Head Start are an investment in children and we must maintain it."

Early Head Start programs such as EAGLE were funded after research found students had a better opportunity to succeed if they began reading at an early age. EAGLE expanded to a Kansas Head Start program and offers prenatal care until children reach the age of four.

Hemenway said KU is enthusiastic about partnering in early childhood education in Wyandotte County and hopes to see many current preschool students become KU Jayhawks.

"I take great pride in everything that has been done here," he said. "All of these partners came together and created and opportunity for students to learn. At the University of Kansas, we have a spot for every child in this room today."

Valerie Mills, a teacher at Bryant Preschool, said the dollars are much needed.

"It's very exciting to receive the funding," she said. "For us teachers it gives us the foundations to meet the needs of the teachers. I think people understand the importance of early childhood education."

Simon said programs such as Head Start give students an important boost before they enter K-12 classrooms.

"It gives them a great start to the road of learning," he said. "It helps the children start at a positive before entering kindergarten and later grades."

Roberts said the grant would help 180 students and nine full preschool classrooms for the Head Start program.

The grant, which has a total value of $3,425,557, is one of the 32 Early Reading First grants provided by the U.S. Department of Education so far this year. The 32 grants total $114,972,187.

Roberts concluded with complimenting the work of those involved in Head Start and said he will maintain his support and "keep going with the programs."