Lawrence Journal-World

On tuition costs

Are tuition premiums placed on some areas of study at Kansas University and other U.S. colleges pushing low-income students into majors with less career potential?

KU began charging "differential tuition" (now referred to on the KU Web site as "course fees") in the early 1990s. The fees were justified as a way to insure students in certain majors have the up-to-date equipment and top-notch faculty necessary to succeed in their careers.

However, the tie between higher course fees and majors that lead to higher paying jobs is undeniable. Too many students already are being left behind because of the rising costs of higher education.

There's nothing wrong with being a history major, but it doesn't serve the state of Kansas and its economic future to push people into liberal arts majors rather than encouraging those who are interested to pursue professional degrees.
Lacking foundation

The column by Nicholas Shump ("Difference between addiction, discipleship," Aug. 12) is filled with errors indicating he had never read my book. He says he had "read of and about" it and even "I haven’t had the opportunity to read Minor’s book entirely" as if he had read any of it at all. In fact, the book, "When Religion is an Addiction," wasn’t available to him, and when he repeats a single quotation from it, he misquotes the introduction exactly the way an earlier article in the Lawrence newspaper misquoted it.

If he had really read it, he wouldn’t have put the phrase "religious fundamentalism" in quotation marks as if I actually use the phrase anywhere in the book. I don’t. If he had read it, he would have been able to answer his question: "What does Minor think of individuals like Martin Luther King, Jr.?" I discuss King by name in Chapter 7. He would have known that I don’t make a "necessary connection" between what he calls religious fundamentalism and right-wing politics because he would have seen my references to people who don’t in Chapter 6. And he probably wouldn’t have come to the conclusion that what I call addiction he calls "discipleship."

I am embarrassed that I have to write this. The Capital-Journal is a better paper than one that has columnists who write about books they have never seen.

ROBERT N. MINOR, professor of religious studies, The University of Kansas, Kansas City, Mo.
**Kids: the blessings that count**

As I write this column, my daughter, Isabella Ramona Shump, sleeps in our bed serenaded by a compilation of lullaby music. I can’t believe Bella is already 1 year old! What’s even more amazing is the fact I even have a daughter.

My wife, Kathie, and I were content with our two beautiful boys and were looking forward to enjoying their journey from adolescence to adulthood. While we’re still enjoying our sons immensely, we’ve been blessed with the presence of our own little princess, Isabella Ramona.

Bella’s namesake and my mother, Ramona Shump, celebrated her 73rd birthday on Tuesday. She, too, is a blessing and one I’m grateful to have as an active presence in my life. Few things have given me more pleasure than the opportunity to see my mother and my daughter together.

I didn’t know my grandparents well. They lived out of town or were at the point in their lives where meaningful conversations were difficult, if not impossible. To see the long line of strong women continuing in my family is yet another blessing.

I turned 40 in December and have become somewhat introspective and nostalgic about my life — past and present. Over the past nine months, I’ve used the Internet to track down long-lost friends and former classmates. I’ve added many of their e-mail addresses to my address book, but I’ve contacted very few of them.

In addition to this nostalgic trip, I’ve thought long and hard about what I’ve done with my first 40 years. Am I where I thought I’d be?

Not exactly, but I can’t imagine any other life than this one. I love my wife, adore my children and can say I enjoy going to work every day. I’m using my mind and my God-given talents to what I hope are good uses. What more could I ask for?

There are still significant items on my life’s to-do list that remain unaccomplished. Most pressing is my desire to complete my Ph.D. There have been many bends in the road, but I feel I’m beginning to see the finish line. These last two weeks as I transition into a new position at The University of Kansas that involves less teaching, I’ve found time to devote to the preparation of my written exams. In fact, I’ve written nearly 20 pages, which is 20 more pages than I had at the start of this semester.

Of course, my academic work and my writing, including this column, pale in comparison to the work that I’m most proud of — that little angel sleeping upstairs and her two beautiful brothers who are a daily source of joy that words can’t express.

**To my readers:** I’d like to apologize if I misled you with my Aug. 12 column regarding Robert Minor’s new book, “When Religion is an Addiction.” At the time of my column, I’d read the introduction to the book posted online, an earlier version of an essay by that same title and two news stories published in the Lawrence Journal-World about Minor’s work. My column was based on these sources and not the book in its entirety, which I hadn’t read. I’ll be reviewing the book in my Sept. 2 column.

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Group helps with leadership, causes

Associated Press  

LAWRENCE — An organization of women philanthropists who are interested in the University of Kansas has provided its members an opportunity to support important causes and expand their own interests.

The group, Women Philanthropists for KU, started four years ago as part of a national trend to get women philanthropically involved.

"It's not a program or a club," said the Endowment Association's Judy Wright, who leads a steering committee of the group. "It's an initiative. The point is to get women more involved through programming and to offer opportunities for leadership on campus."

Wright said that the group tries to consider the way women like to interact.

"We know that, generally, women like to get more involved with causes or programs they want to support," she said. "Men say, 'It sounds great; here's some money.' Women say, 'It sounds great; how can I be of service?'""

Deanell Reece Tacha of Lawrence, a federal judge and one of the organization's two co-chairwomen, said women often look for causes that focus more on children's issues and on health care.

But Tacha and Wright added that women athletics and the sciences, generally popular with men, are also important causes for women philanthropists.

Generally, the group tries to hold programs every year that will connect women who are interested in the University of Kansas with others and the school. The group's Sept. 7 program will be a luncheon with Margaret May Damen, who leads a group that focuses on the creation of wealth by women.

Other programs have included introducing women to the Audio Reader program and visiting the new Lifespan Institute at the Kansas University Medical Center.

"I had women come up to me after the Audio Reader program and ask me how they didn't know it even existed," Wright said. "I suspect many of those women are still volunteering there today."

The group also runs a fund administered by the Emily Taylor Women's Resource Center that gives grants to female undergraduate seniors and graduate students to advance their careers, doing such things as paying for travel to an interview or buying a new suit.

"And that was driven by interest by our women," Wright said. "And it's not a fund we do fundraising for. It's funded entirely through this organization."

Wright said the 33 women on the advisory board, some with their spouses, have donated more than $6 million to the university since the program was founded.

More importantly, according to Tacha, the group has become a source of wonderful friendships.

"It's so energizing to be with a group of women who are so committed to philanthropy, all KU women," she said. "What they can accomplish for the university and community as individuals is impressive, but having that mutual support is even better."