Officials fret over state budget

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When Gov. Kathleen Sebelius took office in January 2003, the greater part of a "billion-dollar problem," a projected shortfall between anticipated revenues and spending commitments, still loomed.

The state has a similarly large problem now. Legislative researchers, in new estimates Thursday, said the state will have a $141 million budget deficit when its 2009 fiscal year ends June 30. Left unaddressed, the researchers said, it would grow to $1.02 billion by the end of fiscal 2010.

Sebelius already has told state agencies to draft proposals to trim their current budgets by 3 percent and to expect deeper reductions for the budget year beginning July 1. The state is delaying $209 million worth of highway projects for at least two months. Higher education officials warn cuts could hinder efforts to train professionals and catch up on maintenance projects.

This year's problems look more difficult than the ones the state encountered in 2003 because that year, Sebelius and legislators used hundreds of millions of dollars worth of one-time accounting gimmicks to help make the budget balance. Those tricks aren't available this year.

"There's less voodoo left," House Speaker Melvin Neufeld, an Ingalls Republican, said Thursday.

The state's gloomy budget outlook results from a new financial forecast that Sebelius and legislators will use in making budget decisions after the Legislature convenes Jan. 14. That forecast projected less revenues than previously anticipated for the 2009 fiscal year and said revenues would remain flat in fiscal 2010.

The state already was headed for budget problems before the turmoil this fall in the nation's financial markets. For more than a year, it's been spending its general revenues significantly faster than it's been collecting them, burning through its cash reserves to sustain its programs.

Most notably, under pressure from the Kansas Supreme Court, the state has phased in a 39 percent....
Budget Continued from Page 1

increase — $892 million — in aid to public schools over four years without raising new revenues for it. Sebelius and legislators also cut business taxes to stimulate economic development.

"We knew we had a challenging budget ahead — there was no question about that," said State Budget Director Duane Goossen. "Then, the financial stuff from late September and October washed over us."

Sebelius has said she wants to protect public schools and entitlement programs, which eat up about two thirds of the state's general revenue. But doing so will require deeper cuts elsewhere. She opposes taxes increases, but has acknowledged, "I haven't taken anything off the table."

Social service advocates are concerned about backsliding on efforts to provide in-home services to the disabled and frail elderly so they don't have to go to nursing homes.

And the governor's plans already have agitated the state Board of Regents, which oversees the higher education system.

Chairwoman Donna Shank said the work of Sebelius' budget staff suggests it's looking to cut more than $114 million, or 13.4 percent, of the regents' share of general revenues over fiscal 2009 and 2010. The cuts would include maintenance projects and block planned expansions of the pharmacy program at the University of Kansas and graduate medical education in Wichita.

"The state's higher education system only recently recovered from the cuts of the last recession," she said.

Part of the state's problems for fiscal 2010 are promises Sebelius and legislators made in previous years. They include, Goossen said, an additional $150 million for public schools and $31 million to cover the growth in some entitlement programs.

In theory, the state could hold school aid flat and take the money for entitlements from other social service programs. It also could refuse to pay back loans from highway funds to other programs made in 2003 and keep paying for the Kansas Highway Patrol's operations with highway funds, rather than ending the practice after fiscal 2009.

The state also could sweep its dozens of special revenue funds for bits of revenue normally dedicated to specific purposes, such as parks. And it could plug the nearly $56 million it will receive as privilege fees from prospective casino developers into the budget.

But doing all of those things — and making the cuts in fiscal 2009 that Sebelius already plans — still would leave a shortfall approaching $500 million at the end of fiscal 2010.

In 2003, the state moved the deadline for home and business owners' spring payment on property taxes ahead by a month and pushed one big aid payment to school districts off a couple of weeks. Those two maneuvers took about $380 million off the budget's bottom line — though the state did pay for them the next fiscal year, when conditions were better.

Those tricks aren't available now. Nor is cutting off state aid to cities and counties, to keep their property taxes in check, because almost all of that aid ended in 2003.

Legislators also hope a federal stimulus package and additional revenues from new state-owned casinos could help with the budget so they can avoid deeper cuts or tax increases, though they acknowledge it's unlikely.

"Is it possible without one or the other?" said House Minority Leader Dennis McKinney, a Greensburg Democrat. "I'm not going to say it's impossible at this point."
State officials worry budget worse than in ’03

By John Hanna
Associated Press Writer

TOPEKA, Kan. — Some officials worry that the state’s budget problems will be more difficult to solve than they were in 2003, when Kansas struggled through what many saw as its worst financial crisis since the Great Depression.

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There were more than 400 black students from Leavenworth and other regional high schools and junior high schools at the 23rd annual Black Leadership Symposium at the University of Kansas. Those at the symposium participated in workshops and dialogues promoting leadership. This year’s theme was "Quest for Your Best and Take the Lead."

High schools selected students to participate based on academic achievement and leadership potential. Students attended workshops about leadership, the importance of a post-secondary education and college preparation.

Barbara Ballard, associate director for outreach at KU’s Dole Institute of Politics, and Robert N. Page Jr., director of the Office of Multicultural Affairs, led concurrent workshops on black female and male leadership.

The symposium included a workshop for high school counselors and advisers on issues students and staff face as they navigate the college search process and a keynote address by Anthony Moore, assistant to the president for diversity and cultural competency and professor of education at MidAmerica Nazarene University in Olathe, Kan. He is an educational consultant and CEO and president of Performance Leadership Group, a nonprofit education, leadership and business development consulting firm.

Among the students who participated in the symposium were Leavenworth High School students Makayla Wright, Lindsay Beamon, Samuel Brundy, Charmaine Burns, Hannah Cooper, Chelsea Demer, James Dunn, Daphne Garrett, Tylesha Goodwin, Cheylene Harper, Brooklynn Hildebrandt, Darian Hill, Desharia Hobdy, Khai Hutchinson, Briana Janas, Geomesha Jefferson, Jarvis Jefferson, Heaven John, Marcus Johnson, Nicolas Johnson, Sierra Joyner, Deverick Lee, Burgandie Lewis, Bria McAnderson, Selia Ramirez, Kendra Thomas, Kyle Wiggins and DaShaundra Wright.
LAWRENCE — On Saturday, Nov. 15, the University of Kansas will honor recipients of its most prestigious scholarships during halftime of the KU vs. Texas game in Memorial Stadium.

More than 680 undergraduates are recipients of one of six top scholarships offered at KU: National Merit, National Achievement, National Hispanic, Perfect Achievement, Summerfield and the Watkins-Berger.

KU currently enrolls:
- 205 National Merit scholars
- 20 National Hispanic scholars
- 9 National Achievement scholars
- 4 Perfect Achievement scholars
- 220 Watkins-Berger scholars
- 228 Summerfield scholars.

Bowen Tyler Marshall, Pleasanton, the son of George and Frances Marshall, is a senior studying Pre-Medicine. Marshall, a graduate of Pleasanton High School, was named a Summerfield Scholar.

Solon E. Summerfield scholarships for men are awarded to top students graduating from Kansas high schools in recognition of outstanding academic achievements, community service and leadership. Summerfield scholarships are funded through an endowment established in
Big changes coming for climate, report says
How will it affect you?

By CHRIS GREEN
Harris News Service

TOPEKA — By the beginning of the next century, human-induced global warming could make Kansas, particularly its western half, a much hotter, drier place, according to a report released Tuesday.

The study by two University of Kansas scientists projected that average temperatures in southwest Kansas could jump by as much as 8 degrees Fahrenheit by 2100 because of increased greenhouse gas emissions.

Throughout the state, temperatures are expected to rise by 2 to 4 degrees, a change punctuated by more intense storms and a more variable climate.

One of the report’s authors, KU climatologist Johannes Feddema, said a hotter, drier, less predictable climate could make water a scarcer resource, affecting the growth of natural vegetation and agricultural productivity.

“Ultimately in Kansas, water is probably
(Continued from Page 1)

the most important factor in our climate,” Feddema said.

Drought patterns are already intensifying throughout the state, according to the study, and western Kansas will likely see the greatest decrease in soil moisture, putting more pressure on irrigation.

Water need — the measure of how much water plants must have to grow — will increase by as much as eight inches because of rising temperatures, the scientists concluded.

Feddema and fellow scientist Nathaniel Brunsell, an assistant professor in KU’s geography department, led the study, which was commissioned by The Land Institute in Salina.

Nancy Jackson, executive director for The Land Institute’s Climate and Energy Project, said her group hoped the report would better answer Kansans’ questions about how climate change would specifically affect the state.

The KU scientists began by choosing models reflecting the historic variability of the Kansas climate from 1950 to 2000. They created projections based on “middle-of-the-road” assumptions from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change on future increases of atmospheric greenhouse gases.

While scientists have disagreements over global warming, as a group most agree that it is happening and that human-made emissions from the use of fossil fuels are a prime cause, Feddema said.

Next month, though, the Kansas Livestock Association will hear from a scientist who dissents from those conclusions at its convention. Dennis Avery, director of the Hudson Institute Center for Global Food Issues, questions humankind’s role in causing global warming.

Members of the cattlemen’s group are concerned about changes that could handcuff the economy even while there is doubt remaining about the causes of global warming, spokesman Todd Domer said.
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From Page: 2  
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Shawnee student up for Rhodes scholarship

SPECIAL TO THE DISPATCH

A Kansas University senior from Shawnee preparing for a career in cancer research has advanced in the competition for one of 32 prestigious Rhodes scholarships awarded annually for graduate study at Oxford University in England.

Stephanie Ann Hill, a 2007 Goldwater scholar at KU and a biochemistry and chemistry major, has been selected for district interviews Nov. 21 and 22 in Kansas City, Mo. She is the daughter of Douglas and Mary Hill and a graduate of Shawnee Mission Northwest High School.

Two winners are announced from each of 16 districts following the Nov. 22 interviews by Rhodes Foundation representatives. KU students compete with finalists from colleges and universities in Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri and Mississippi. Separate state interviews are no longer conducted.

Rhodes scholarships provide full tuition and fees for two years of graduate study at Oxford University, as well as a living allowance.

KU students have won 25 Rhodes scholarships since 1904, more than all other Kansas colleges and universities combined. Cecil Rhodes, British philanthropist and colonist, established the Rhodes scholarships in 1902. U.S. students between ages 18 and 24 who have demonstrated high academic achievement and leadership are eligible to apply for a university nomination.

Hill is a National Merit Scholar, a Chancellors Club Scholar and a Kansas Governor’s Scholar. For the past three years, she has worked in the lab of Brian S. Blagg, assistant professor of medicinal chemistry, whose research includes the development of anticancer agents.

Hill’s contributions to recent findings by Blagg’s team earned her the distinction as second author of a manuscript submitted to the Journal of Organic Chemistry.

Hill will also be a second author of a manuscript on the results of another research project soon to be submitted for publication. Blagg said that for an undergraduate to earn two publications in three years is extraordinary.

An accomplished violinist, Hill is in the KU Symphony Orchestra and was a concertmaster with the Kansas City Youth Symphony.
CAROLINE BOYER
CBOYER@THEWORLDCO.INFO

In the minds of those who supported the Johnson County Education and Research Triangle sales tax, the high voter turnout added to the sense of victory on Election Day.

The sales tax passed with 151,364 votes in favor, 57 percent of the total vote, and 113,790 against.

“We thought it would be a very good test for the triangle, to make sure as many voters as possible got to have their say,” Mary Birch, coordinator for the triangle campaign, said Nov. 5, adding that the results were a tribute to the voters. “In my personal opinion, last evening they did something very, very special for the long-term future of Johnson County.”

The one-eighth cent triangle sales tax, which has no sunset, will fund projects and programs for the Johnson County Education Research Triangle Authority, a proposed development to create three new facilities within the county, two for Kansas University and another for Kansas State University.

The KU facilities will include the Edwards Campus Business, Engineering, Science and Technology Center in Overland Park and a Cancer Clinical Research Center in Fairway. The K-State facility would be a National Food and Animal Health Institute, built on the school’s Innovation Campus in Olathe.

The next step is to form a Triangle Authority of seven members, who must be elected officials in Johnson County, to oversee the distribution of sales tax funds. Appointments to the board will be made by the governor, the Kansas Board of Regents, the Johnson County Board of Commissioners, KU, KSU and Johnson County Community College.

Birch said each of the appointing bodies would likely try to appoint someone as soon as possible in the hopes that the authority could have its first meeting before the end of the year. She said elected officials on the authority could be local legislators, county commissioners or even city council members.

The authority’s function is to ensure that the monies are divided equally, that the three facilities, degrees and research promised are delivered to the residents of Johnson County and that the funds are managed correctly.

The state of Kansas and Johnson County both have the authority to audit the Triangle Authority at any time. However, the Triangle Authority also will have a regular independent audit to ensure credibility, efficiency and public confidence.

Tracy Thomas, a former Shawnee City Council member who had campaigned against the triangle tax, sent out a comment on the tax’s passage via email.

“Opponents working for free didn’t stand a chance due to the deceptive ballot wording engineered by our County Commission Chairman (Annabeth Surbaugh), who stands to benefit in future re-election bids from delivering an endless tax subsidy to three organizations,” Thomas said. “Question 2 was a hidden bond issue within a tax that will never expire.”

Thomas said proponents “played the cancer sympathy card” with the cancer clinic so voters, who had 40 other races to keep track of, thought the triangle tax was reasonable.

Thomas continues in her criticism of the triangle’s future.

“None of the three proposed projects in the triangle can operate without matching funds, which have just dried up with the economic meltdown,” she wrote. “When that money does not materialize, (just as with Light Rail in KCNO) then the premise of the triangle collapses. But voters will have financed construction of empty buildings.”

But Birch said supporters do not anticipate many problems related to the economic slowdown. She said the tax would build the basic infrastructure and fund related degree programs and research, so the only effects of the economy might be slower leveraging in the private and public partnerships expected with the triangle.

Birch said the two new buildings at the KU Edwards campus and Olathe K-State campus would likely take 18 months to two years to construct, while the cancer clinic will require the remodel of an existing building, which will take about a year.

The tax will go into affect in April 2009, and the authority will not be able to distribute the funds until three months later, Birch said, so the authority will use the time until then for design and engineering work in preparation for construction.
ROTC Students Observe Veterans Day

More than 150 student members of Air Force, Army, Marine and Naval ROTC units at the University of Kansas participated in Veterans Day observances Nov. 7-9.

Air Force Cadet Jaimie C. Wappelhorst, a KU junior majoring in history, assisted with the program as a driver. The daughter of Ken and Dana Wappelhorst of Andover, she graduated from Andover Central High School.

Observances were planned at several campus locations including Budig Hall, Strong Hall, along Memorial Drive and the Dole Institute of Politics. All events were free and open to the public.

KU’s Arnold Air Society, Ennis C. Whitehead Squadron, affiliated with Air Force ROTC, was in charge of Veterans Day events this year. Lawrence Ditton, Olathe junior, was Arnold Air Society commander, and Stephanie Koenig, Ballwin, Mo., junior, was Veterans Day event coordinator. Lt. Col. Gena Stuchbery has been commanding officer of KU Air Force ROTC Detachment 280, and Maj. Gary E. Marsteller has been commandant of cadets.

Ceremonies began Nov. 7 with a flag retreat in front of Strong Hall, followed by a reception and program in Budig Hall. Guest speaker was Adrian Lewis, professor of history and director of the Office of Military Graduate Education. He earned a doctorate in European and military history from the University of Chicago and served in the Army from 1977 to 1994, retiring with the rank of major. A military historian, he is the author of “The American Culture of War: A History of American Military Force from World War II to Operation Iraqi Freedom” and “Omaha Beach: A Flawed Victory.”

Following the program, a lamp-lighting ceremony preceded 24-hour vigils at the Korean War Memorial, the Vietnam War Memorial and the World War II Memorial Campanile. During the vigils, two ROTC members stood guard for one-hour periods at each of the three locations, ending at 7 p.m. Nov. 8.

A new event this year was the Lawrence Veterans Day 5K Run Nov. 8 to benefit Veterans Upward Bound.

ROTC students took part Nov. 9 in the salute to veterans and their families at the Dole Institute of Politics. The 17-piece Moonlight Serenade Orchestra outfitted in World War II-era uniforms performed a USO-type program of big-band-era selections from Duke Ellington, Tommy Dorsey, Benny Goodman, Harry James and Glenn Miller.

KU’s ROTC program also trains cadets, midshipmen and officer candidates from Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence; Baker University in Baldwin City; the University of St. Mary in Leavenworth; Washburn University in Topeka; Mid-America Nazarene University in Olathe; and Kansas City Kansas Community College. This year, Air Force
More than 225 high school students, including several from Caney Valley High School, sent pumpkins soaring at the 2008 High School Design Competition, hosted Oct. 28 by the University of Kansas School of Engineering.

The annual competition allowed teams of students in ninth through 12th grades to test their creative and technical talents as they designed and built a small trebuchet to send a petite pumpkin pillow flying. A trebuchet is a gravity-powered machine similar to a catapult that is capable of launching an object into the air.

Schools from around Kansas came away with winners’ medals in the five competition categories. Among those winners was a Caney Valley team dubbed the Justice League, which claimed third place in competition that ranked teams on accuracy in hitting a target chosen by the KU School of Engineering. Team members included seniors Alex Taylor, Alan Carey and Casey McCammon.

Also competing at the unique engineering event was a Caney Valley team called The Avengers. Team members included junior Dillon Barton and seniors Brandon Blagg, Chris Henry, and Blaine Heady.

Les Zoch is the physics teacher at Caney Valley High School.
Maize Students Attend Black Leadership Symposium

FOR THE CLARION

High school students win cash prizes at KU’s Black Leadership Symposium

FOR THE CLARION

LAWRENCE — Three high school students earned cash prizes for their writing skills at the 23rd annual Black Leadership Symposium held Oct. 23 at the University of Kansas.

Winners of the “Reading Gets You There” contest were Lawrence Free State High School student Ruaa Hassaballa, 11th grade; Salina High School Central student Rachal Jackson, ninth grade; and Shawnee Heights High School student Brea Lewis, 12th grade.

Local students attending were: Wesley Alexis, Donald Hughes, and Jasmine Riggins all of Maize High School. They were among more than 400 African-American students from Topeka, Kansas City, Wichita and other regional high schools and junior high schools participating in the KU-sponsored symposium that offered workshops and dialogues promoting leadership. This year’s theme was “Quest for Your Best and Take the Lead.”

The reading competition required students to read selected books and write reviews on such authors as Frederick Douglass, Langston Hughes, Harriet Jacobs, James Baldwin, Alice Walker, Ernest J. Gaines, Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. DuBois, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Margaret Walker and Richard Wright. High schools selected students to participate based on academic achievement and leadership potential. Students attended workshops about leadership, the importance of a post-secondary education and college preparation.

The conference was sponsored by KU’s Office of the Provost, Office of Multicultural Affairs, Office of Admissions and Scholarships, Multicultural Resource Center and Continuing Education.