Regents’ leader: Repairs, salaries, top needs

By Cristina Janney
Newton Kansan

The Kansas Board of Regents will seek funding for three major projects as the 2008 legislative session gears up.

The three projects include money to repair the Regents schools’ crumbling infrastructure, funds for faculty salaries and an investment project to increase the number of workers in the specialized fields of teaching, pharmacy and construction.

Christine Downey-Schmidt, Regents chairwoman and an Inman resident, said the board has tried to break down its requests and show legislators what they would be getting for their money.

In the past, the board requested a lump sum.
Last session, the legislature funded about 40 percent of the $663 million the Regents schools needed to fix a backlog of facility repairs.

“This is not paint and carpet,” she said. “This is heating and cooling and even some safety concerns.”

The universities have had to dip into student tuition to address some repairs that constituted safety hazards, she said.

About 429 academic buildings are slated for repairs. These do not include stadiums, dormitories or other student facilities.

Last year, the Legislature approved $90 million in direct state funding, $44 million in retained interest, $158 million in tax credits and

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$100 million in bonding authority.

Downey-Schmidt said she hoped the Legislature would fund the remainder of what was needed to help the schools address their facility needs, including passing a half mill that is supposed to be used to fund such building projects.

Downey-Schmidt said part of the problem is the state has not historically funded the full facility needs of the Regents schools.

In addition to funding the deferred maintenance projects, the state needs to approve enough funding so the schools can stay current with their maintenance, she said.

The state universities also continue to struggle to provide competitive pay rates for faculty, Downey-Schmidt said.

The board is proposing a 3.4 percent overall increase in faculty salaries based on the Higher Education Price Index, which would cost the state $26.8 million. The board also is proposing a 1.6 percent increase in funding to the tune of $12.6 million to be targeted toward faculty retention and recruitment.

The third part of the addressing the shortage of specialized workers in the teaching, pharmacy and construction fields through a $20.1 million program.

A portion of the funds would go to Emporia State University and The University of Kansas teacher education programs. A portion of the funding would go to KU to open a pharmacy school in Wichita, and part would go to Pittsburg State University to fund its construction school.

Downey-Schmidt said she hopes the Legislature will fully fund all the projects the board proposed, but breaking the funding into investment projects will give legislators choices of which projects they wish to support.

"We hope we have made the legislators' jobs easier," she said. "However, they still have hard decisions.

Do they use funding to fix structures in which students are being taught or put dollars into faculty who are in front of the classroom or dollars into immediate needs of the state? We hope they will fund a package deal."

— Christine Downey-Schmidt, Kansas Board of Regents chairwoman

"...They still have hard decisions. Do they use funding to fix structures in which students are being taught or put dollars into faculty who are in front of the classroom or dollars into immediate needs of the state? We hope they will fund a package deal."

The board approved a multi-year tuition plan last year, but the schools still struggle to provide quality education at a competitive price, Downey-Schmidt said.

She said it was the board's concern that Kansas historically has been a a low-scholarship state and low-tuition state, but tuition has increased and the state remains a low-scholarship state.

She said she is concerned about how the tuition hikes will affect mid-income families.
Legislators’ challenge: Meet all needs, use less cash

BY JIM SULLINGER AND DAVID KLEPPER
Eagle Topeka bureau

TOPEKA — On July 1, Kansas government had the largest reserve or ending balance in state history: $935 million. When the fiscal year ends next summer, it will be down to $500 million.

And when lawmakers walk through the Capitol doors today to begin the 2008 legislative session, they’ll face a mountain of financial obligations — the consequences of spending decisions made in prior years.

The Kansas Legislature has been putting hundreds of millions of dollars on the “credit card,” and payments are beginning to mount for schools, highways, tax cuts and other initiatives.

In the next fiscal year alone, these obligations amount to more than $600 million, or roughly 10 percent, of an estimated operating budget of slightly more than $6 billion.

Without a sudden influx of new tax revenue, budget experts predict an even lower reserve after the 2009 fiscal year — close to $300 million by some estimates.

“We’re now spending more than we’re taking in,” said Duane Goossen, the governor’s budget director.

Spending decisions by the Legislature are more than just numbers on a balance sheet. They mean something to people like Ernie Claudel, a retired Olath teacher who wants a cost-of-living raise for retired public employees, the first in 10 years.

The Legislature is playing financial catch-up, Morris added, and doing it aggressively.

House Speaker Melvin Neufeld, R-Ingalls, said lawmakers in those years started borrowing money and leveraging future dollars to maintain spending levels rather than reducing the budget and “changing the way we do business in 2002.”

“We squandered a great opportunity to make government efficient,” said Neufeld.

The Legislature approved state-run gambling last year, authorizing casinos and slot machines. Even though the law is held up in the court system, lawmakers are hoping for more gaming revenue in 2010.

Adding to the difficulty is the larger dose of politics expected this session.

With all 165 legislative seats up for election this year, Kansans can expect a rush of bills designed to court votes.

As a result, bills to step up immigration enforcement, expand social service programs cut taxes, or target an issue of local importance will take on an even greater political tone.

“I think we can safely predict that no one will raise taxes,” said Burdett Loomis, political science professor at the University of Kansas.

Legislature

From Page 1A

Kevin Tubbesing, a small-business owner in Shawnee, wants something done about the high cost of health care.

And Harrietta Harris is a foster parent who looks after two disabled 21-year-olds who have been waiting as long as three years for state assistance that goes to the developmentally disabled. One, who also is blind and has cerebral palsy, started living with Harris after the young woman’s mother died of a brain tumor.

The defining issue

Lawmakers say the budget is the issue that could define this year’s session.

Harris and the others are only a fraction of the people and organizations who want help from lawmakers. The Kansas Board of Regents, for example, is asking for an additional $151 million, including $84 million for deferred maintenance at state universities. Public school officials want an additional $26 million to improve teacher salaries.

But these are some of the bigger budget items already in the pipeline for 2009:

- The final year of the three-year school funding bill passed in 2006: $122.7 million
- The final year of the 10-year highway plan: $173 million
- Elimination of the estate tax and reduction of the franchise tax: $37 million
- Increased payment to the Kansas Public Employees Retirement System: $40 million
- Replacing revenue that cities and counties lost when the state eliminated property taxes on new business machinery in 2006: $45 million

Together, the commitments will raise the budget 4.2 percent over current spending.

Gov. Kathleen Sebelius will outline her legislative agenda at 7 p.m. today to a joint session of the Legislature. It will include some of her major budget goals. Then lawmakers will spend the next 90 days putting their own stamp on 2009 spending.

Election-year spending

Conservatives say spending is out of control.

“Tell you how out of whack our budgeting system is,” said Alan Cobb, executive director of the Kansas arm of Americans for Prosperity, which lobbies for spending restraint.

But Senate President Steve Morris, R-Hugoton, said the problem isn’t overspending. It’s not spending enough earlier in the decade on critical state needs.

At that time, the national economy was struggling and state revenue was declining.

The final year of the three-year school funding bill passed
Cost of college on the rise

By EMILY BEHLMANN
 ebehlmann@ctelegram.com

Rising grocery and gas bills can be financial inconveniences, but for many families, bigger costs are looming or setting in — post-secondary education.

Nationwide, per-semester tuition and fees at four-year universities average out to $3,092 this year; a 6.6 percent increase compared to last year, according to the College Board, which administers college entrance exams and collects a variety of college data.

Kansas costs generally are lower, averaging $2,415, but they rose by between 5.1 percent at Fort Hays State University to 9.5 percent at Emporia State University, according to the Kansas Board of Regents.

Costs are outpacing inflation and the increases in Kansans’ incomes. In 1985, average annual tuition and fees at Kansas research universities (KU and K-State) made up 7.6 percent of the state’s per-capita income of $21,771, according to the Board of Regents. Ten years later, it made up 14.3 percent of the per-capita income of $32,866.

Numbers like these are enough to concern parents like Jeff and Marjie Clarke. With a senior at KU — the “reality check,” said Marjie — a senior at Garden City High School and a seventh-grader at Kenneth Henderson Middle School, is they’re among families entrenched in efforts to pay for education. The Clarkes said their oldest daughter, Whitney, received a scholarship at KU and that they save for all of their children’s education. They also want their children to take at least some of the responsibility.

“We wanted them to have some ownership, but we can’t pay for it all anyway.” Jeff Clarke said. “We didn’t do it quick enough, soon enough. (Whitney’s) was gone by her sophomore year.”

Fueling the rise

Edward Hammond, president at Fort Hays State University, said tuition costs at his school are dependent somewhat on inflation. But the key factor is how much funding the school is allocated by the Kansas Legislature. While western Kansas’ only university also is the state’s least expensive, it’s difficult to keep costs down, he said.

When Hammond arrived at FHSU 10 years ago, he said state contributions were about 80 percent of the general fund and tuition and fees 20 percent. Now, that split is about 65 percent to 35 percent, he said.

“Every year, more responsibility of funding the university has been pushed onto tuition,” he said.

To help, universities have adopted cost-savings measures, like energy-efficiency programs. In addition, KU has launched a four-year tuition compact for incoming freshmen that guarantees them the same rate each year, based on the assumption that increases would average 6 percent annually, said Todd Cohen, KU director of university relations.

Still, challenges are present across the state, according to the Board of Regents.

Christine Downey-Schmidt, chairwoman of the Board of Regents, said in a press release this summer, “Today’s difficult fiscal challenges played a large role in our tuition decision (to approve this year’s rates). State funding per university student continues to decline, campus utility costs continue to increase and student expectations for increased educational quality all contribute to the necessary cost enhancements.”

Across the nation, too, state and local contributions per student have fluctuated, though they overall have increased in the past two years after a period of declines, according to the College Board. Years of declines corresponded with the largest tuition increases, the board stated.

Some local parents, including the Clarkes, said they encourage their children to look at community colleges as a less expensive option. Funding at places like Garden City Community College is less dependent on the state, as most funds come from local taxpayers.

GCCC President Carol Ballantyne said the college tries to only increase costs every other year, and then by just $2 or $3 per credit hour, in hopes that, with financial aid, the college will be accessible to many.

Tuition isn’t the best way to make much money, she said, because with an enrollment equivalent to 3,200 full-time students, each $1 increase brings in just $3,200.

“But people expect that if they’re paying taxes, the students should be paying their fair share,” Ballantyne said.

Paying the bills

Some tools are in place so the burden of rising education costs isn’t insurmountable, local financial advisers say.

Grant Elpers, financial consultant with AG Edwards, said many of his clients are concerned about paying for education. Though other options exist, the most popular choice for saving is a 529 plan, administered by the states, because the plans are flexible and have tax benefits, he said.

“If a person wants to put money in an account for education, I think a 529 plan is the best avenue,” said Lon Pishny, financial planner with Pishny

Continued from Page A1

See Education, Page A5
Financial Services.

However, both stressed that they advise their clients to focus first on saving for their own retirement.

“There are many other avenues to pay for college,” Pishny said.

**Other avenues**

Kathy Blau, financial aid director at GCCC, encourages students to consult sources like high school counselors, college financial aid offices and other students who have been there.

Another key step is filling out the Free Application For Financial Aid, which opens up opportunities for need-based grants and subsidized loans, Blau said.

Free money, from scholarships and government grants, always is a first choice, she said. Employment and loans often are necessary to make up the difference, she said, but she cautioned against taking on more loans than are reasonable.

Some GCHS students already are preparing for the process as early as their freshman year. Taylor Morrow said she’s contributing money she earns from her job to a savings account, and that she will apply for scholarships at K-State.

Ileana Hang, also a freshman, said she thinks she’ll be ready for the process. She’s obtaining scholarships, grants and loans now to fund a 10-month study trip to the United Kingdom next year, so, when it comes time for college, she hopes she knows just what to do.

### Financing options

**Before-college savings**

- **529 Plans** — Called Learning Quest plans in Kansas, these state-administered, tax-advantaged savings plans enable savings for future post-secondary education costs. Earnings grow tax-deferred at the federal and Kansas levels. The earnings portion of withdrawals used to pay for qualified education expenses is tax-free at state and federal levels. More information is at www.learningquestsavings.com.
- **Coverdell ESA** — Education savings accounts with a $2,000-per-year limit on contributions that can be used for education expenses from kindergarten through college.
- **Custodial accounts** — For a guardian with a minor, the account is taxed at the child’s rate. At age 21, the child takes full ownership of the funds and can use them for college or any other purpose.
- **K.I.D.S. Program** — Kansas program in which the first 1,200 low-income families (below 200 percent of the federal poverty level) who apply each year can receive up to a $600 annual match on their 529 plan contributions. This year’s applications are available Feb. 1 at www.learningquestsavings.com.

Sources: Grant Elpers, financial consultant, AG Edwards; Lon Pishny, financial planner, Pishny Financial Services; www.learningquestsavings.com

**Paying the bills**

- **Scholarships** — Meet with high school counselors and the schools’ financial aid offices and endowment boards to find opportunities, and apply for everything possible. Visit the Kansas Board of Regents Web site (www.kansasregents.org) for state programs.
- **Grants** — Fill out the Free Application For Student Aid (FAFSA) at www.fafsa.ed.gov before April 1 or before colleges’ priority deadlines that come as early as February.
- **Loans** — Need-based subsidized loans are available from the government via the FAFSA. Borrowers should be aware of when and how any loans will be paid back.
- **Employment** — Investigate work-study and campus employment options.
- **Attend GCCC’s financial aid nights** — Garden City High School, 7 p.m., Monday; Scott Community High School, 7 p.m., Jan. 21; Deerfield High School, 7 p.m., Jan. 22; Holcomb High School, 7 p.m., Jan. 24; Lakin High School, 7 p.m., Jan. 28; Wichita County High School, 7 p.m., Jan. 31.

Source: Kathy Blau, director of student financial aid at GCCC; Pishny
Lawrence Journal-World, on University of Kansas in China (Dec/31/07)

The world is becoming ever smaller, which is why it is welcomed news that Kansas University is forging important new relationships with higher education in China.

KU recently announced that it had signed an agreement to develop a direct exchange with the prestigious Peking University.

Leaders at the Chinese university reportedly are particularly interested in sending more graduate students to KU and in fostering strong exchange programs for faculty and scholars from the two schools.

Although KU has direct exchange programs with three other Chinese universities, the partnership with Peking University is significant because of the school’s international reputation. The university has about 30,000 students, more than 200 research institutes and 42 colleges and departments, according to a KU press release.

At about the same time the Peking University pact was being signed, KU’s Confucius Institute was being honored as a Confucius Institute of the Year by the international organization that covers about 210 institutes around the world. It was one of only four institutes in the United States and 20 in the world to receive the designation.

This is quite an accomplishment for an institute that was only dedicated in May 2006.

Both because of its huge size and its focus on building its economy, China is perhaps the most important developing nation in the world.

Forming ties with China and its top universities gives KU an important connection to that country’s economic and educational growth.

Much emphasis has been placed on giving university students in Kansas broader experience with international cultures and education.

The Confucius Institute honors and the new partnership with Peking University are important steps in KU’s efforts to accomplish that goal.
MISS TEEN

Courtney Hart, 16, competed recently in the Miss Kansas Teen USA scholarship pageant Dec. 14 at the Lied Center on the campus of The University of Kansas. Out of 33 contestants Courtney was chosen as one of five finalists and received third runner up in the competition. She is a sophomore at Olathe Northwest High School.
Bayer works to expand animal health effort

CAROLINE BOYER  
CBOYER@THEWORLD.CO.NEO

Even with the tremendous progress of the Animal Health Corridor initiative thus far, one Shawnee firm is taking its integral role in the initiative a step further.

This month, two master’s degree students will begin working at Bayer Animal Health in Shawnee as part of a masters program that is the newest element in the Animal Health Corridor initiative. It’s Bayer’s latest contribution to the movement, which has the goal of bringing even more animal health-related firms to the Kansas City area and solidify its position as the global leader for animal health and nutrition research, innovation and production.

Bayer partnered with Kansas University in the educational initiative to create a master’s in business administration program aimed at students with a scientific background and management interest. The Global Science & Management Integration Program was designed by KU, but it will be used to attract talent to Animal Health Corridor.

Participants, who must have a DVM or Ph.D., will rotate through various positions at Bayer while earning the MBA through the KU School of Business. Having the program available could prove attractive to animal health companies looking at moving to Kansas City, as many need managers who have scientific knowledge.

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IN THE effort to create an Animal Health Corridor in the Kansas City area, Bayer Animal Health has taken a leading role. The Shawnee-based company has made yet another contribution to the corridor initiative by helping the University of Kansas create a master’s in business degree program specifically aimed at training animal health and other bioscience professionals in management.
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“This is the perfect program for professionals who are already working in the animal-health industry and want to explore an innovative new career path,” Jamie Jackson, director of human resources at Bayer Animal Health, said when the program was announced last summer.

This isn’t the first time Bayer has taken part in the Animal Health Corridor movement, however; the company and its president and general manager, Joerg Ohle, have been one of the main supporters of the initiative since its beginnings in 2005.

The Kansas City Area Life Sciences Institute spurred the Animal Health Corridor as part of efforts to lure more biotechnology companies to the area. Bayer, the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce and the Kansas City Area Development Council became involved, and research found that there was a wealth of animal health companies in the area along Interstate 70, between the veterinary schools at Kansas State University and The University of Missouri at Columbia.

A study confirmed that the companies in the corridor represented a larger market share in the animal health industry than anywhere else in the world. Four of the 10 largest animal health companies were in the corridor, including Bayer, and 42 companies had their U.S. or global headquarters in the corridor.

Bayer’s participation in the movement includes Ohle’s position as chair of the initiative’s advisory board, and Bob Walker, Bayer Animal Health’s director of communications, serves as a member of a group that meets monthly to discuss progress in the corridor.

Currently, more than 120 animal health companies call the corridor home, accounting for $5.1 billion, or 32 percent, of the $15.2 billion global animal health industry. And all indications show many more will be on their way.

Word about the corridor initiative has reached national levels, with articles written by the Associated Press, The Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association and Animal Pharm World Animal Health & Nutrition News magazine.

And the most telling evidence: the Kansas City Area Development Council is currently working with about 15 animal health companies concerning a relocation or expansion.

“That’s good, because when we started this initiative, there were three,” Walker said.

All of this, including the new MBA program, will be promoted anew at the North American Veterinary Conference Jan. 21 in Orlando, Fla., and the Western Veterinary Conference Feb. 19 in Las Vegas, Walker said.
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Tutoring makes a difference for students who need help

KRISTI HENDERSON
Shawnee Dispatch File Photo

Sami Safadi had been getting tutored for two years. Then last year, he quit.
And then his homework wasn’t getting done.
This year, the Lawrence sixth-grader returned to a tutoring program and he’s seen an improvement in his grades, he said.
“I like it because it gives you a better understanding of it and you can actually get it done with help,” Sami said.
Sami is one of many students in area districts who benefit from various tutoring programs.
One of the largest resources for tutoring programs in the area is universities, such as Kansas University and Baker University. But districts that don’t have the benefit of a nearby university still have several resources available for students who need assistance.
In a smaller district such as Perry-Lecompton, where finding manpower to staff tutoring programs is difficult, software has been useful, said Superintendent Denis Yoder. The software, which is used at all grade levels, can assess a student’s strengths and needs, and then create individualized lessons, Yoder said.
Students get time during the school day to use the software, Yoder said.
Another resource is students. In the De Soto and Eudora school districts, students help either their peers or younger students.
In De Soto, for instance, accelerated math students take time during the week to help students whose scores are lower, said Alvie Cater district spokesman.
“The students are able to explain it in a way that maybe an adult can’t explain it,” Cater said.
“We use whatever we think can work.”

Eudora students tutor
In Eudora, high school students go to Nottingham Elementary during the day to provide tutoring assistance, said Don Grosdidier, assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction.
Both districts also rely on teachers to provide assistance to students. In Eudora, teachers are paid an extra stipend to staff an afterschool tutoring program for at-risk middle school students, Grosdidier said.
The De Soto district is also able to offer a 21st Century Community Learning Center, funded by a state grant, at Starside Elementary, Cater said. The program offers academic assistance as well as recreation activities.
Universities provide assistance
Many of the resources used in those districts are also used in Lawrence and Baldwin City. But the two districts also benefit from programs staffed by university students.
One such program is Youth Educational Services, or YES, which benefited Sami Safadi. The program, run by the University Career Center at KU, pays students to work as tutors in Lawrence public schools. For the fall semester, there were 28 tutors working in 18 schools, including Quail Run, where Sami attends classes, said Christina Kuhn, YES coordinator.

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KU SENIOR  Carly Tomlins, of Salina, Kan., right, tutors Quail Run Elementary sixth-grader Sami Safadi on Dec. 7 at the school. "The tutoring helps a lot," Sami said.
school district. Like YES, Boys and Girls Club gets a helping hand from KU students. There are about 350 to 500 people helping out with the Boys and Girls Club each year, and a majority of those involved are KU students, said Janet Murphy, executive director.

Murphy said Boys and Girls Club’s programming, which includes homework assistance along with recreation, leadership and other activities, reaches about 1200 students on any given day.

On the WIN team

In Baldwin City, Baker University students play an important part in tutoring programming.

Students who are in the school of education’s classroom management class are given the task each fall of coordinating, planning and running Wednesday Instructional Night, or WIN. The program participants work on homework, read and take part in activities such as visiting the Baldwin City Public Library.

Michelle Swain, a Baker graduate whose fifth-grade son, Dylan, has gone to WIN for several years, says the program helps her son focus on schoolwork.

“He’s more likely to do his homework on nights that he has WIN because it’s an academic setting,” Swain said. “The problem with homework is that it’s hard to get them into that school frame of mind when it’s at home. It has helped him a great deal.”

Her son has enjoyed the program so much, she said, that he’s disappointed he can’t come back next year. The program, which is offered only in the fall semester, just serves students in kindergarten through fifth grade.

Real-life experience

Young students aren’t the only ones who benefit from tutoring programs such WIN and YES. University students gain valuable experience, too.

Karla Wiscombe, a Baker education professor who created the WIN program, said the classroom experience is beneficial to her students.

“It’s the first time to really take charge and be in control,” Wiscombe said. “They just actually get to see what it’s like to work the with students.”

KU students working with YES say they also benefit from working with children. Many of the YES tutors are education majors or they have plans to pursue careers in a school setting.

Even teachers whose students are tutored benefit. Quail Run sixth-grade teacher Nancy Dietze said her students are more prepared and more confident than before they were tutored.

“It makes a huge impact,” Dietze said. “They’re so much more involved because they’re not trying to hide.”
City provides vacation activities

CAROLYN COGSWELL

STAFF WRITER

Mission Parks and Recreation Department provides school children something to do over winter break. "Not every parent can take the whole holiday off," Scott Deschenes, recreation program supervisor, said. "We offer a chance for working parents to have a place for their children to be. It's safe and engaging. We try to keep them as active as possible."

Winter break camp has six teachers who keep the children involved in activities from 7:45 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., camp director Liz Sheibler said.

Two of the teachers, Sheibler and Michael Bates, have bachelor's degrees in elementary education. Sheibler is a graduate student at the University of Kansas.

"Right now we have 22 kids," Sheibler, Overland Park, said.

Sheibler said the children go on field trips, play dodge ball, eat snacks and watch movies.

"Earlier today we went bowling," she said.

The children also engage in art projects, group games and board games.

"Tomorrow they'll go swimming," she said.

Joseph Peakin, 7, Mission, said he enjoyed all the activities.

"We go swimming in an indoor pool and we do art projects," he said. "We eat snacks twice a day and we usually play a few gym games and a few other things."

He said during free choice time he enjoys board games.

"I like Yahtzee," he said.

"I like making new friends,"

6-year-old Zoe Kohoucek said.

The camp for children ages 6 to 12 ran Dec. 26-28 at the

"TAKING PART in the Winter Break Camp at Sylvester Powell Jr. Community Center, Lisa Martin, 11, Mission, makes a New Year's Day card for a mentally disabled adult Friday. Mission Parks and Recreation Department sponsored the camp at the community center, 6200 Martway, Mission."

Sylvester Powell Jr.
Community Center, 6200 Martway, Mission.
Student receives alumni award /SS

Ellen Stolle, Prairie Village senior majoring in biology and biochemistry at the University of Kansas, will receive one of three Judy L. Ruedlinger Awards of $1,000 for spring 2008. Stolle is the daughter of Calvin and Susan Stolle and a Shawnee Mission East High School graduate. The KU Alumni Association presents the awards to Student Alumni Association Leaders.
Predictions 2008

MEMO

WHAT NEXT FOR MORRISON?
Former Kansas Attorney General Paul Morrison will be found guilty of ethics violations and a misdemeanor for telephone harassment, but he will be found innocent of felony criminal charges. Paul will go on to become a successful criminal defense attorney in Johnson County. Linda Carter will settle her EEOC charge of sexual harassment for more than $100,000, paid for by the state. (The Johnson County district attorney is a state employee, and Morrison was district attorney when the alleged sexual harassment occurred.)

TAINTED
Paul Morrison’s once likely successor to the Johnson County district attorney’s office, Democrat Rick Guinn, will be defeated in the November 2008 race against Republican Steve Howe, because Guinn will be unfairly tainted by his close relationship to Morrison.

BODIES FOR A.B.
Morrison’s replacement at the A.G. office will be Chris Biggs, who ran for that office against Phil Kline in 2002 and lost by only a half percent. Biggs, who was Junction City’s district attorney for 14 years, is now serving as Kansas Securities commissioner, appointed by Gov. Sebelius. Whoever the nominee is, he or she will face Kris Kobach in 2010. Kobach is currently Kansas chairman of the Republican Party.

SPLITTING THE BARTY
On the local front, here’s what will happen to Overland Park’s annexation proposal. With Commissioner Ed Peterson recusing himself because he has a conflict of interest, the commission will decide 4-2, behind closed doors in executive session, to allow only a portion of Overland Park’s proposed annexation to be approved. Then, the meaningless public hearings will follow.

SLAM-DUNK
The quarter-cent sales tax renewal, to be voted on in August for public safety, will be a slam-dunk. It will pass with 60 percent approval, or more.

RESOLUTION TRIANGLE
Another sales tax proposal for an eighth-cent, currently below the radar screen, will go on the ballot this November. Known as the Research/Education Triangle, the proposal will include the expansion of the University of Kansas at its Johnson County campus; will bring an expansion of cancer research at the University of Kansas Medical Center into Johnson County; and, for the first time, will bring Kansas State University into Johnson County, with a large food safety laboratory in Olathe. Six commissioners will vote to put it on the ballot, with only Commissioner John Topilkar voting against it. With the personal campaigning by the chancellors of KU and K-State, the proposal will pass by the narrowest of margins.

NOT VERY GUILTY
Planned Parenthood will be found guilty of only a handful of misdemeanors out of the 107 charges filed against it by District Attorney Phil Kline, and with a grand jury investigating, as well. Kline will declare it a victory. So will Planned Parenthood.

MOORE AGAIN
Republican Nick Jordan, who will be running in November against U.S. Rep. Dennis Moore, will not only lose the 3rd District, but he will lose Johnson County, as well. One issue that will hurt Jordan badly is his lack of any post-high school education.

S’LONG, CARL
The Chiefs will start their next season without Carl Peterson. Enough said.

RAIL-LESS
Leaving Johnson County for a moment, I predict Kansas City, Mo., will not have a light rail proposal passed by voters by the end of 2008 and probably no sooner than 2010, if ever.

THE NEW PREZ
John McCain, with Mike Huckabee as his running mate, will be the next president of the United States. He will narrowly beat Hillary Clinton, whose running mate will be Barack Obama.