MBA certificate programs offer a shorter path

The process involves condensed versions of key classes, but in a shorter time frame.

By SU BACON
Special to The Star

Busy entrepreneurs, newly promoted managers and others interested in understanding business operations can get an overview of MBA course work without the cost or commitment of graduate school.

That's the draw behind MBA certificate programs.

Certificate programs typically offer condensed versions of fundamental MBA classes such as accounting, management, marketing and finance. The length of the program varies from 10 weeks or so to a year and requires much less time than the 36 to 45 credit hours necessary for an MBA.

"A lot of people in the work force want to increase their skills in certain areas without getting a full-blown degree," said Steven Parscale, director of accreditation for the Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs based in Overland Park. "An MBA certificate will give them some excellent skills but will not replace a degree."

Variations of an MBA certificate program are available at many business schools in the Kansas City area. Convenience is much of the appeal.

Consider the MBA Essentials program through the American Business Women's Association, a national organization based in Kansas City that focuses on professional development and career advancement.

"MBA Essentials allowed me to gain relevant, meaningful information from qualified instructors without having to restructure my life," said Janis Stewart, who owns Office Helpline, a Lawrence company that provides bookkeeping, software training, payroll and other office services to small businesses.

Since the women's association began offering the MBA certificate in 2004 through a partnership with the University of Kansas, about 100 members have earned the certificate.

Twelve four-hour courses are required, and three of the courses are covered every year during an annual leadership conference. The courses are offered sequentially, and members can enter the certificate program at any time.

The program began in response to members who requested a higher level of professional development, said Carolyn B. Elman, the association's chief executive officer.

"We worked with KU to tailor the MBA certificate for the time frame we have," Elman said.

Since 1997, the University of Kansas has offered an MBA certificate program at its Edwards Campus. Over the years, nearly 300 have completed the program which awards a certificate but not credit hours.

Most of the participants are either managers from large corporations who have been promoted from a technical side and need a broader view of business or younger executives preparing to take over their family-owned business, said William L. Beedles, professor of finance and faculty coordinator of KU's Center for Management Education.

Also enrolling are employees from government agencies who need to grasp a business perspective and students considering an MBA who are testing the waters.

Students attend a three-hour class one night a week for 13 weeks and pay $2,695 for the program.

In 2006, Kansas State University introduced a for-credit graduate certificate in business administration. The program began on line and is now available in night classes on campus in Manhattan as well.

Students take five three-credit-hour classes and pay $877.60 per class on campus or $1,083 to $1,328 per class on line. Students take one or two classes a semester.

"All courses can be applied to the K-State MBA program if the student wishes to pursue the full MBA program," said Ron Jackson, program coordinator for the Division of Continuing Education in Manhattan.

The program was designed for people who are at a midcareer point and are ready to move up within their company to take on challenging upper-management leadership roles, Jackson said.
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 door today to begin the 2008 legislative session, they’ll face a mountain of financial obligations — the consequence of spending decisions made in previous years.

The Kansas Legislature has been putting hundreds of millions of dollars on the credit card, and payments are beginning to mount up 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 such as Ernie Claudel, a retired Olathe teacher who wants a cost-of-living raise for retired public employees, the first in 10 years.

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

SEE KANSAS LEGISLATURE
Olathe resident Michael Wasmer, the father of an autistic daughter, hopes the Legislature will find money to identify and help more autistic children at an earlier age.

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

“It’s kids like her that can’t speak up for themselves,” Harris said. “There has to be someone speaking up for her. They say they want these kids to live as normal as possible, but if her funding doesn’t come through, she can’t do it herself.”

**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 help care for disabled 21-year-olds. They are asking for additional $151 million to improve teacher salaries.

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 tax revenue that cities and counties lost when the state eliminated property taxes on new business machinery in 2006: $45 million.

Together, all 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.

Conservatives say spending is out of control.

“This tells 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.

Sen. Karin Brownlee, an Olathe Republican: “There’s no room for new spending. Right now we’re spending through the roof. We’re addicted.”

But Republican Senate President Steve Morris of 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 revenues were declining. The Legislature is playing financial catch-up, Morris added, and doing it aggressively.

House Speaker Melvin Neufeld 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, a Republican from Ingalls.

Sen. Dwayne Umbarger, a Thayer Republican and chairman of the Senate Ways and Means Committee, said lawmakers could afford the projected spending in the upcoming 2009 budget, but 2010 could be a serious problem.

“What we’re not factoring in right now is additional revenue from gaming,” he said. “We’ll be getting some money, although not a lot, at the end of fiscal 2009.”

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

**A political year**

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 safety predict that no one will raise taxes,” said Burdett Loomis, political science professor at the University of Kansas.

However, a tight budget will make it harder to cut taxes and expand spending to new programs that appeal to voters. House Republicans said Friday that they want to hold the increase in the 2009 budget to 5 percent, which includes all the spending already on tap plus an additional $70 million, which isn’t a lot to spend on new programs.

What’s left?

“This is the year for symbolism and pilot projects,” Loomis said.

Senate Majority Leader Derek Schmidt, an Independence Republican, will be one of those urging restraint.

“To use a sports metaphor, this needs to be a rebuilding year, and that’s not very popular to say in an election year,” Schmidt said. “People are lined up halfway down the block requesting, and in some cases demanding, increases to this program or that one.”

He said the overriding theme this year needs to be fiscal caution and financial stability.

One politically charged issue is the recent rejection of a coal plant expansion in western Kansas. A state regulator — a member of the Democratic governor’s Cabinet — refused to allow the expansion because of climate-change concerns.

Many lawmakers immediately opposed what they called an arbitrary, politically driven decision.

They warned of dire consequences for, western Kansas and vowed to get the decision overruled.

“Neufeld and Morris, leading critics of the rejection, said they’re optimistic that a compromise may be in the offing.”

If that deal proves elusive, however, the debate over energy policy could turn ugly and potentially hinder work on the budget and other issues.

“It’s going to require some give on both sides,” Schmidt said.

“Without that, we could end up with conflict and consternation.”
TOPEKA – The state Board of Regents could discuss next month whether to cap tuition increases to keep Kansas universities affordable.

Several board members expressed concern Wednesday that costs to students and their parents were rising too steeply and too rapidly.

However, they also worried that any new restrictions on such tuition charges could rob the state's six public universities of the funding they need to excel.

The board scheduled a discussion of tuition charges for its Feb. 13 and 14 meetings. Board members also invited university leaders to offer their insights on the issue.

"This isn't about looking back and making judgments," said Regent Gary Sherrer of

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Overland Park. "It's about looking ahead to the future."

Each May, the state Board of Regents hears tuition and fee proposals from leaders at all six universities. The board then finalizes them the following month, which recently has meant endorsing each university's proposal.

However, Regent Janie Perkins of Garden City said board members want to look at whether they need to set more definite parameters to guide schools in making their rate proposals.

The move comes after a recent overhaul in the board's composition. Five new members joined the nine-member board in July after being appointed to their posts by Gov. Kathleen Sebelius.

Since 2002, tuition and fees at state universities have more than doubled at the University of Kansas and Kansas State University. Increases at the state's other schools have averaged at least 8 percent a year.

At the same time, student debt loads among borrowers were 5 to 21 percent higher for 2006 graduates than their 2004 counterparts.

Sherrer said he was concerned that tuition hikes were outstripping the ability of citizens to pay, since increases in personal income haven't risen by the same percentage for most citizens.

However, board members also noted that universities face increasing pressure to raise tuition because funding provided by the Kansas Legislature hasn't met rising costs in higher education.

In fact, the state's share of funding college operations has fallen to all-time lows in recent years. At the same time, many college leaders say they are struggling to pay competitive salaries to their employees and cover rising energy, health care and other costs.

"I think the Legislature has got to understand that these costs keep going up and somebody has to pay to pay for it," Regent Dan Lykins of Topeka said.

In recent years, much of that burden has fallen on students and their parents, some board members admitted.

"It is a tax on kids," Regent Jill Docking of Wichita said of tuition increases sparked by relatively flat state funding.

Board Chairwoman Christine Downey-Schmidt of Inman said she hoped next month's discussion would lead board members to an acceptable middle ground.

"I think the most difficult job we have to do is balance all the different pieces of this," Schmidt said.
Bioscience group announces grants

BY SARAH KESSINGER
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TOPEKA – The Kansas Bioscience Authority announced new planning grants Wednesday to develop centers of innovation in medical research and new, marketable uses for Kansas grains.

Nearly $580,000 will aid in the planning of three new Kansas Bioscience Centers of Innovation, which are to be established to help commercialize bioscience research and help attract and expand related industries.

"They will define what it will take for Kansas to be a leader in these areas," said Authority President Tom Thornton, during Kansas Bioscience Day at the Kansas Statehouse.

The grants include:

- $200,000 for planning the Kansas Center for Biomaterials Innovation and Design that includes Wichita State University, Pittsburg State University, Via Christi Health systems and more than 20 other private industries and educational institutions.

- $180,000 to help plan a Kansas Biosciences Innovation Center in Drug Delivery at the University of Kansas. The center would seek to develop new business opportunities both in urban and rural Kansas. He also said the Bioscience Authority wants to continue hearing the public’s ideas at upcoming stakeholder meetings in Kansas communities.

- $200,000 to aid in the development of the Kansas Innovation Center for Advanced Plant Design, which focuses on commercial opportunities for wheat, sorghum, small grains and native plants and prairie grasses.

The center would be based at the Kansas State University, collaborate with the Kansas Wheat Commission and research programs at KU.

"We believe this can develop industrial uses for wheat, soybeans and other plants," Thornton said.

Thornton said the centers would seek to develop new business opportunities both in urban and rural Kansas. He also said the Bioscience Authority wants to continue hearing the public’s ideas at upcoming stakeholder meetings in Kansas communities.

"We get very, very excited about getting out and listening to what priorities are around the state," he said.

The authority, a $581 million initiative, is funded by a tax on bioscience firms. It was created by the Legislature’s Kansas Economic Growth Act in 2004 to expand research, support bioscience start-ups and expand and attract existing industries.

The authority also introduced its first two "eminent scholars" Wednesday. The researchers accepted invitations to Kansas to conduct bioscience studies with potential to become new enterprises in the state.

The new scholars are Blake Peterson, a professor of medicinal chemistry who joined the University of Kansas from Pennsylvania State University, and Juergen Richt, who will join Kansas State University this spring as an animal health researcher.

Peterson develops synthetic cell receptors as a new tool for drug delivery and studies small molecule-protein interactions to generate potential therapeutic leads. At KU, he will focus on developing anti-cancer drugs and delivery systems. Funding for his work will total $5 million over five years.

Richt comes from the National Animal Disease Center and Iowa State University. His recent research includes emerging viral diseases of swine and prion diseases, such as mad cow disease. His expertise is in diagnostics and vaccinations, which he will apply at K-State’s Biosecurity Research Institute. Richt’s research is expected to attract public and private sector funding of up to $1 million within several years, according to the bioscience authority. Funding for his work will total $2.05 million over five years.

Thornton said the scholars should prove a financial asset to the state.

"We believe fundamentally these scholars will return far more in funding to Kansas," he said.
Lesson needed

Other elected officials could benefit from schooling being prepared for Lawrence leaders

Lawrence city commissioners have discovered breaking the state's open meetings law comes with a price.

For the commissioners, conducting business behind closed doors will mean an extra session of night school, a two-hour refresher course Tuesday on compliance with the Kansas Open Meetings Act.

For Lawrence, the closed-door meeting comes with a higher toll, the loss of a business expansion that might have added as many as 150 jobs to the city's economy.

That's the bad news. The good news is that the training session, negotiated by the Kansas attorney general's office, is open to anyone.

You know, like council members and commissioners from nearby cities.

Like, say, Topeka, where the city council is under investigation by the Shawnee County district attorney for possibly violating the open meetings act.

The subject is touchy. Governing bodies often mistakenly think they have a right to conduct business in private whenever they choose. They do have that right — on a very small number of subjects, such as personnel matters.

Too often, though, they close the door at a whim.

The penalty, as the Lawrence commissioners learned, might not be particularly painful. But it's an embarrassing slap on the wrist.

The Lawrence commission got into trouble when it went into closed-door executive session to consider economic development incentives for a pharmaceutical company.

The plan backfired. After news emerged about the open meetings violation, the pharmaceutical company announced it was no longer going to accept the incentives package.

And then the kicker — the company announced it had scuttled its plans to expand in Lawrence.

As part of their arrangement with the attorney general's office and to avoid prosecution, the commissioners agreed to attend the training course.

We'd like to see the room at Lawrence City Hall filled next Tuesday, and we'd be tickled if Topeka council members were among the crowd, which is expected to include Douglas County commissioners and Lawrence school board members.

University of Kansas professor Mike Kautsch will lead the two-hour session.

Oh, by the way, the meeting is open to the public.
Gov. Kathleen Sebelius outlined future energy policy and supported health reforms, to be funded largely through a cigarette tax increase, in her State of the State address Monday night after her annual State of the State address.

Cigarette tax revenue source for majority of governor’s plans

By James Carlson
THE CAPITAL-JOURNAL

Gov. Kathleen Sebelius outlined future energy policy and supported health reforms, to be funded largely through a cigarette tax increase, in her State of the State address Monday night after her annual State of the State address.

The Democratic governor laid out her priorities for the session to meet the challenges faced in an “innovation economy.”

“The innovation economy is not waiting somewhere out on the horizon,” she said. “The innovation economy is here, now, today.”

She called for a number of new energy policies including a reduction in the state’s greenhouse gas emissions and development of a comprehensive climate change plan.

Many in the Legislature still are smoldering over her administration’s recent decision to deny the permit for a coal-fired power plant in western Kansas, and her speech alluded to that controversy.

“For those of us here tonight, we must resolve to settle our differences the way Kansans expect us to,” she said. “Not by looking back over our shoulders, but by looking to the future.”

Senate Majority Leader Derek Schmidt, R-Independence, was skeptical of cutting greenhouse gases on the state level. He said because carbon pollution is a global problem, it requires a global solution.

“Otherwise those who step out first wind up in a competitive disadvantage for growth,” he said.

Rep. Tom Hawk, D-Manhattan, said he was impressed by Sebelius’ call for energy efficiency.

“I think she laid out a challenge that we can’t just be business as usual in the way we produce, market and regulate energy,” he said.

Health reform figures to be a top issue this session, and Sebelius reiterated her support for the Kansas Health Policy Authority’s recommendations for reform.

“I strongly encourage the passage of the health plan in its entirety this session,” she said. “It will begin to fix our broken system and provide better care for all Kansans.”

She didn’t mention specifics.
Educate: Sebelius supports KHPA health care reform

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of the 21 recommendations, which include a controversial 50-cent increase in the cigarette tax that would raise an estimated $61 million. Much of the remaining recommendations are contingent on that funding source, Sebelius has recently said.

But raising taxes during an election year is never palatable for politicians, said Rep. Jeff Colyer, R-Overland Park.

"It seems politically unrealistic to raise taxes in 2008 to expand a government health program two years into the next governor's term," said Colyer, a physician.

Sebelius also said she wanted to double the capacity of The University of Kansas Pharmacy School. Sen. Vicki Schmidt, R-Topeka, said 30 counties in Kansas have only one pharmacy and six counties, including Wabaunsee, have no pharmacist at all.

The governor's proposal, Vicki Schmidt said, would add 40 spots to the Wichita campus and bring in funding for a new pharmacy building on the Lawrence campus.

New education programs also populated Sebelius' speech. She said her budget proposal included funding for the third year of the K-12 education plan created in 2006 by the Legislature under pressure from the Kansas Supreme Court.

She also proposed a fourth year of the finance plan with $27 million for all-day kindergarten. Similar measures have failed in the past.

The speech also outlined $3 million in new scholarships that would help 2,000 Kansans enter higher education and another $1 million in new teaching scholarships in math, science and technology.

"Talk to any superintendent across the state, and they'll tell you their biggest challenge is getting math and science teachers into the classroom," said Rep. Jim Ward, D-Wichita.

The governor didn't mention a few topics some in the Legislature wanted to hear about.

Derek Schmidt said he missed any discussion of the state budget.

"This is going to be a tough budget year, the next three or four years, because we have to finance commitments we made in previous years," he said.

Sen. Tim Huelskamp, R-Fowler, said Sebelius' speech was full of programs that "cost a lot of money."

"Where's that money coming from, because our economy is not growing," he said.

Sebelius didn't mention other hot-button topics, such as immigration and tax cuts, either.

In all, Derek Schmidt said the governor's speech was aimed at inviting consensus.

"I think we should take it in that spirit," he said.

Ward said he also liked Sebelius' tone of unity. He said despite any controversy over the coal-plant issue, the lawmakers will come together for Kansas.

"We may have some blood on the carpet, but at the end of the day I think we'll get things done," he said.

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Gambling revenue earmarked for debt reduction, programs

By Tim Carpenter
THE CAPITAL-JOURNAL

Pharmacy students at The University of Kansas are counting on a run of good luck by Gov. Kathleen Sebelius.

So are the state's technical schools, aviation researchers, park advocates and historic site preservationists.

Details of Sebelius' new budget were unveiled Tuesday to reveal the Democratic chief executive is relying on an infusion of $81 million in new revenue from the expansion of gambling in Kansas.

However, that pot of gold hangs in the balance as the Kansas Supreme Court considers the constitutionality of a bill passed by the 2007 Legislature opening the door to casinos and placement of slot machines at racetracks.

Sebelius is urging lawmakers to earmark $57 million of the new revenue to reduction of state debt, including $15 million to cover bond payments for renovation of university buildings.

The remainder would be spread among programs ranging from the $250,000 allocated to the Kansas Bureau of Investigation to $4.5 million dedicated to state park rehabilitation and green-space development.

Other earmarks include $4 million for maintenance of state buildings, including the Capitol Complex in Topeka; $4 million for a Homeland Security training facility; $3 million for housing assistance, including cities hit by natural disaster; $2.5 million for aviation research at Wichita State University; $2.5 million for equipment at technical schools; $2 million for bioenergy research; $1 million to expand the KU pharmacy school; and $500,000 for historic site preservation.

While Sebelius made plans to spend gambling revenue, the Supreme Court is evaluating whether the Kansas Constitution allows construction of resort casinos and placement of slots at tracks.

"I think we can be relatively confident that this money will be there," said Senate Minority Leader Anthony Hensley, D-Topeka.

Under state law, the new gambling money must be used for state debt reduction, infrastructure improvements or property tax relief. Sebelius decided not to devote a portion of this new gaming revenue to cutting property taxes.

"Clearly, there were legislators who thought we were getting property tax relief, and thought we were going to reduce debt, and thought we were going to address the unfunded infrastructure problems at the regents," said House Speaker Melvin Neufeld, R-Ingalls. "They might have thought wrong, according to this budget."

Duane Goossen, the governor's budget director, said Sebelius' proposed 2009 fiscal year budget was fueled by about $40 million in revenue from casino and slot-machine "privilege" fees paid by developers setting up the new gambling businesses in Kansas.

It also relies on an infusion of about $40 million in revenue from slot machines operating at tracks.

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Jessica Ndungu, 5, foreground, and Joy Ngibulnl, 4, paint during class Wednesday at McClure Elementary’s all-day preschool. Proposals in the Statehouse would expand school opportunities.

’08 Legislature a class project

Support bipartisan for education funding, but how much, where to spend unresolved
Gov. Kathleen Sebelius wants the state to form education policy without losing sight of Kimberlin and Samuel Lovell’s future.

The Mulvane twins were born Jan. 8, 2007 — the day she began her second term as governor.

"The decisions that we make in the months ahead and in the years to come will help to determine what opportunities these two young Kansans — and thousands more like them — will have as they grow up," Sebelius said. "Will they have strong schools to attend? Will they acquire the tools they need to succeed?"

Sebelius said these questions boiled down to adding millions of dollars to state spending on educational programs for students from preschool to graduate school.

While there is bipartisan support in the Legislature for spending more on education, there is no consensus on how much to add and how that money should be allocated. Education already consumes 44 percent of the state’s $13 billion budget.

**Governor’s outline**

Sebelius is asking legislators to deposit $23 million into early childhood education programs for

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### Education: Regents want big piece of the pie

Continued from Page 1A

at-risk children in the most underserved areas of the state. She would follow that initiative with $27 million for full-day kindergarten in public schools.

Her budget sets aside $168 million in new aid to K-12 schools to fulfill the third year of a spending plan adopted by the Legislature and governor in previous years. That is about $45 million more than anticipated, but it reflects rising costs of special education programs.

The governor also proposed $1 million for new teaching scholarships in difficult-to-fill math, science and technology fields.

Sebelius said lawmakers should approve a $3 million program to help about 2,000 Kansans go to college. In addition, she said, collaboration between the state’s technical schools and businesses should be broadened to better provide the kind of skilled workers necessary to compete for jobs.

"We’re pricing college out of the reach of too many families," the governor said.

She also would pump $35 million in new funding for the general operating grant and $15 million for building repairs in the university system administered by the Kansas Board of Regents. There also would be $50 million in bonds to build a new School of Pharmacy building at The University of Kansas in Lawrence.

### Other thoughts

Christine Downey-Schmidt, chairwoman of the Board of Regents, said the governor’s budget recognized "higher education as a critically important priority."

"In what many would describe as a lean or constrained budget year, the governor has recommended meaningful investments in higher education that are absolutely essential for enhancing this state’s future," she said.

The Board of Regents submitted a proposal to boost spending on the higher education system by $150 million.

Alexa Posny, the state’s commissioner of K-12 education, said the governor’s plan to increase state appropriations to public school districts would help with teacher recruitment and retention.

"There is a tremendous teacher shortage that we know is going to occur," Posny said.

She said pulling starting teacher salaries in Kansas up by an average of $6,000 to the national median would take about $250 million.

Mark Evans, superintendent of the Andover school district, said state investment in programs that help students manage the high cost of a college education and the modest salary of a teacher would produce results.

"It allows us to plan for the future, plan for hiring and let young people in college know that, ‘Hey, we’ re going to have a job for you,’ he said.

Advocates of spending more on education should first examine whether past increases triggered better student academic performance, said Alan Cobb, state director of Americans for Prosperity.

R-Ingalls, said the education policy debate should include discussion of restructuring higher education to better meet needs of Kansas businesses. Attention ought to be paid to stabilizing in-state tuition rates at these higher education institutions. And, he said, there also should be a stronger effort to develop a uniform budget system for Kansas school districts that promotes budget transparency.

Sebelius said the 2008 Legislature has a duty to move the state’s education system into the future.

"We can ensure a bright future for Kimberlin, Samuel and all Kansas
children,” she said.

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KANSAS GETS RIGHT PEOPLE FOR BIG JOBS

The arrival of two new scientists in Kansas should be viewed as more than additions to university faculty rosters. It’s also an economic development win.

With the help of a new program through the Kansas Bioscience Authority, Kansas State University successfully recruited Jürgen Richt, a top animal health researcher.

The University of Kansas is bringing on Blake Peterson to its pharmacy school. The scientist is an innovative researcher with a proven ability to secure millions of dollars in federal grants and a strong interest in entrepreneurship.

He also will advance the state’s quest for designation as a leading cancer care and research hub. Peterson is developing novel ways of delivering drugs more effectively.

“He is really a star in terms of medicinal chemistry nationally,” said Roy Jensen, director of the University of Kansas Cancer Center. “He is developing an international reputation.”

Should its board grant final approval at a meeting this week, the state-funded authority will contribute a total of up to $7 million over five years to the professors’ recruitment packages. The scientists are the first to come in with the help of the authority’s Eminent Scholars program.

When state officials devised the Kansas Economic Growth Act, they sought to boost the state’s economy by expanding research activity.

Many other states hold similar aspirations, but making it happen has proved to be a formidable challenge, said Tom Thornton, the authority’s president and chief executive officer.

“Initially there was a lot of excitement about the biosciences,” Thornton said. “It’s a broad and amorphous term. We are all about focus. We are focused on expanding research in areas that support industrial clustering in areas such as animal health and drug discovery.”

The eminent scholars program will be one of the initiatives that leaders of the authority will showcase when meeting with Kansas lawmakers, Gov. Kathleen Sebelius and other officials while visiting Topeka this week.

The eminent scholars program is so promising because it can bring a great research boost more quickly than solely relying on currently employed scientists to apply for more grants, Thornton said.

“One of the most effective ways you can do that is to marry up a strong research program with a world-class distinguished scholar,” Thornton said. “That individual can bring substantial leadership to further research goals.”

The authority’s program requires universities to nominate candidates. Then an outside panel of experts not affiliated with the state determines whether they indeed are top scholars likely to help the state’s biosciences advance.

One of the review panel’s observations is that the selection of Richt and Peterson would be a good fit for the state, but also the scholars, Thornton said.

Richt comes from Iowa, where he held positions in a federal laboratory and at Iowa State University. Peterson arrives after holding positions at Pennsylvania State University.

“The quality of the existing research programs in Kansas will allow these guys to be far more productive,” Thornton said.

Modern academic laboratories are far more than havens for white-coated scientists to think big thoughts and crank out scholarly papers. This happens, and to be sure, it’s important.

Yet successful university lab operations also should be viewed as bustling high-tech businesses.
The lead researchers typically form teams of a dozen or more assistants, graduate students and sometimes technicians. They run with multimillion-dollar budgets, with much of the money coming from federal research grants.

The authority and the University of Kansas, for example, are planning to invest nearly $12 million in lab space and other equipment needed to get Peterson's research running in the state. His lab is expected to bring in $22 million in outside research funding over the next decade, according to an estimate that has been characterized as conservative.

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Rep. Nancy Boyda, D-Kan., is cautious on the topic of congressional “earmarks.”

The term, which refers to funding set aside for projects in the U.S. House or Senate spending bills, has both negative and positive connotations.

“There are good earmarks and bad earmarks,” said Thomas Seay, spokesman for Boyda. “As far as the congresswoman is concerned, the federal budget will be spent anyway. Her role is to see the people in Kansas District No.2 are taken care of.”

Senators and representatives consider earmarks to be good because they provide funding aimed at benefitting people living in their districts.

Earmarks are considered to be bad by critics who believe they lead to wasteful spending.

This year, freshman Democrats were the No. 1 sponsors of “earmarks,” according to a USA Today analysis. The report said Democratic leaders set aside money for vulnerable freshman Democrats, meaning those who beat out Republican incumbents or won in districts carried by President Bush, to use on appropriations for their districts.

Earmarks from freshman Democratic lawmakers added up to $351 million, according to USA Today.

Seay said it would be inappropriate for Boyda to consider whether sponsoring such projects would benefit her re-election campaign. Accountability for appropriations, he said, is what she finds important.

New rules this year required all earmarks to be accompanied by the name of the sponsor. Seay said Boyda went a step further by including a list of all of the projects she sponsored on her Web site, boyda.house.gov.

Following is a list of earmarked projects Boyda sponsored or co-sponsored in the 2008 Omnibus Appropriations Bill, totaling more than $190 million.
Bob Beatty, assistant professor of political science at Washburn University, answered a few questions about congressional appropriations and their effect on re-election campaigns.

**What Is the Earmark Controversy for Politicians?**

The earmark controversy is one that’s been going on for years. Constituents love their congressman but hate Congress. Earmarks are a part of that.

If you were to ask a citizen what they think of Congress, they would say, “Oh, I can’t believe how much money they spend.”

Then if you went back the next day and said, “Congress appropriated $5 million to fix the bridge,” that same person would say, “It’s about time we got some money.”

**Do Senators and Representatives Benefit from Sponsoring Earmarks?**

Of course it helps a congressman during re-election to tell their district, “This is the money I got for you.” They’re being rewarded at election time for those earmarks. That’s the conundrum for Congress. It’s a tightrope.

**How Has Rep. Nancy Boyda, D-Kan., Dealt with the Issue?**

I think Nancy Boyda has been trying to walk that tightrope. I think she’s tried to get some light shown on the earmark process.

You can’t get rid of earmarks completely. Voters still like them. I think she’s tried to split the difference.

She campaigned on a platform that Congress is out of control. Her challenge is to find the right number of earmarks that is enough to keep voters satisfied but not too much that she would be a hypocrite.

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