KU Cancer Center serves as centerpiece of NCI effort.

DESCRIPTION: The University of Kansas Cancer Center is part of KU Medical Center, which is the medical research and education arm of the University of Kansas. National Cancer Institute designation — KU’s No. 1 priority — typically is granted to academic medical centers. Therefore, KU Medical Center will be the entity applying for an initial five-year designation as an NCI cancer center, probably by 2011, and then for designation as an NCI comprehensive cancer center. The KU Cancer Center, however, is creating and administering the many support functions needed to build the NCI-designated program, envisioned as a collaborative network of cancer research and clinical sites throughout Kansas and Western Missouri.

BACKGROUND: KU’s commitment to cancer research and care was bolstered by the 1996 creation of the Kansas Cancer Institute. In 2003, it was renamed the Kansas Masonic Cancer Research Institute (KMCRI) in honor of a five-year, $15 million pledge from the Kansas Masonic Foundation. A year later, Dr. Roy Jensen was recruited from the NCI-designated Vanderbilt University-Ingram Cancer Center to be the KMCRI’s first full-time director. Soon thereafter, KMCRI set a course for NCI designation under a new name, the KU Cancer Center. KMCRI continues to exist as KU Cancer Center’s research arm, coordinating three established and two developing cancer research programs. They include a program that will focus on obesity, which is expected to replace smoking as the leading U.S. cause of cancer within 10 years.

THE BIGGER PICTURE: A total of 173 cancer-related researchers work on KU’s Lawrence campus and its medical center campuses in Kansas City, Kan., and Wichita. The KU Cancer Center also is forging partnerships with basic-research organizations, such as the Stowers Institute for Medical Research, and clinical-research sites, including hospitals and oncology practices throughout the bistate region.

SHARED RESOURCES: KU Cancer Center gives innovators at its partner institutions access to shared resources at greatly discounted costs. This support, designed to help advance cancer breakthroughs to patients, is provided in seven areas: biospecimen; biostatistics/informatics; biotechnology innovation and optimization; clinical trials; drug discovery and development project management; flow cytometry; and high-throughput drug screening.

KEY PLAYERS: KU Cancer Center still seeks an associate director of shared resources. But five of its eight associate director slots have been filled. These include a clinical research position being filled on an interim basis by Dr. Karen Kelly, KU Cancer Center’s deputy director. Kelly has helped put in place a number of shared resources aimed at helping researchers advance new cancer therapies into clinical trials.

ANOTHER KEY PIECE: In February, KU Cancer Center launched the Midwest Cancer Alliance to enhance region-wide access to clinical cancer trials sponsored by KU-affiliated investigators, large cooperative organizations such as Southwest Oncology Group and private industry. Membership, ranging from $10,000 to $50,000 a year, also provides access to new cancer-prevention tools and techniques and continuing-education opportunities. The five charter members were KU Hospital, Stormont-Vail HealthCare, Mt. Carmel Regional Medical Center, Hutchinson Hospital and Goodland Regional Medical Center. Each institution represented on a new KU Cancer Center advisory board also will be granted membership.

OTHER PLAYERS: Advising Jensen will be an organization expected to be named the Midwest Cancer Alliance Partners Advisory Board. Proposed members include leaders of Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics, the Kansas Bioscience Authority, Kansas State University, KU Hospital, Saint Luke’s Health System, Stormont-Vail HealthCare, the Stowers Institute, Truman Medical Centers and Via Christi Health System. They will assist with strategic planning and philanthropic support related to the pursuit of NCI designation. Achieving desig-
nation as a cancer center in the next three years will require $72 million in additional community support for new faculty, research support and outreach programs, and facilities improvements, Jensen said.

Rob Roberts
Jeffrey Daniels recently graduated with the highest distinction from the University of Kansas, where he received the degree of Bachelor of Science in business and management, with concentration in economics and human resources. In addition, he was presented with the Beta Gamma Sigma Frank T. Stockton Key Award. This award is presented each year for scholastic achievement to a senior who is a member of the Beth Gamma Sigma Honor Society with the highest grade point average. The award is named in honor of Frank Stockton, the first dean of the School of Business. It has been presented every year since it was created in 1925.

Jeffrey is the son of Rob and Cindy Daniels.
KC native earns rabbinical degree

By Beth Lipoff
Staff Writer

Tomorrow, Kansas City area native Craig Lewis will add a new title to his name: “rabbi.” Lewis has been studying for five years at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati to earn that distinction.

“My family, I always thought I was the one who was not going to be involved, because I did not study Jewish studies in college,” he said.

Lewis is the son of Hilary and Stuart Lewis of Prairie Village, Kan., and the brother of University of Kansas Hillel director Jay Lewis.

Craig Lewis said he was grateful for the support he’s had from the community, especially from Congregation Beth Torah.

His Jewish social involvement as a kid in Kansas City also helped steer him onto this path.

“NFTY was one of the main centers of my social life and my Jewish life when I was growing up, and it created a strong Jewish foundation for me. It also taught me the fundamentals of what it means to be a Reform Jew,” Craig Lewis said.

With his degree in hand, he’ll be heading off to Irvine, Calif., at the end of June to become the assistant rabbi at Congregation Shir Ha-ma’alot.

CHANGING CAREERS

While living in California several years ago, Lewis had a part-time job at the Bureau of Jewish Education in Orange County, leading retreats and developing programming.

“It really was there that I discovered that I really enjoyed teaching Judaism to children, at first, and then I discovered that you can teach it to people at every age,” Lewis said.

Before deciding to enter rabbinical school, Lewis had worked in customer service and as a special-education teacher.

“I wanted to go back and study something that I could commit my life to; I had worked in other fields and had not really enjoyed anything that I had done,” Lewis said. “Business was not what I was cut out to do, but I wanted to go back into something as an educator.”

He already had a bachelor’s degree in business from the University of Kansas and a master’s in management from Ecole Supérieure de Commerce, Clermont-Ferrand, in France, and the support of his wife, Jen.

“I initially avoided what I knew I wanted to do, which was become a rabbi, because it’s a five-year program, and that’s huge commitment to make,” he said.

HUC-JIR has campuses in New York, Los Angeles and Cincinnati, and Lewis said Cincinnati particularly appealed to him because it requires its students to complete a rotation of clinical pastoral education, where students train with a hospital chaplain.

Soon after this year’s class of HUC-JIR students turned in their theses at the end of February, they converged on the Los Angeles campus for placement interviews with congregations nationwide. Lewis had 12 interviews. Six congregations asked him to visit in person.

ENGAGING, INTERACTIVE

“When I read the description of the pulpit (in Irvine), it was described as a conversational pulpit, where there’s a constant conversation between the bimah and the congregation,” Lewis said. “I believe that worship and study are not performances. They are engaging and interactive.”

Lewis will start at his new congregation July 1. His wife will also be involved in the Jewish community, as the cultural arts director for the Merafe Jewish Community Center of Orange County.

“The search committee felt that he just fit. We liked the way he approached Judaism,” said Wendi Fast, co-chair of the search committee and incoming co-president of Congregation Shir Ha-ma’alot. “We thought he interacted with our congregants really well. He seemed to work really well with the kids, and he practices Judaism the way we practice Judaism.”

“Definitely, we liked his sense of humor — it’s important to us that we enjoy things, that we have fun. We’re very excited that he’s going to be joining our congregation, and we’re looking forward to many years with him and Jennifer.”

Lewis won’t forget Kansas City as he journeys to Southern California.

“I always have had Gates barbecue sauce shipped where I’ve lived in the world, and that includes France and Jerusalem. Wherever I’ve been, I’ve always been a strong advocate of Kansas City,” Lewis said.
Welcome, Dr. Davidman

I was thrilled to learn that Lynn Davidman is a new professor at the University of Kansas. Her book "Traditions in a Rootless World: Women Turn to Orthodox Judaism" is a must-read for any Jew who doesn't think modern, professional, intelligent women can make a home for themselves in the Orthodox Jewish world. I can hardly wait to see what new multidisciplinary and multi-movement work she'll start -- and her students will start -- in KU's Jewish Studies program.

Welcome, Dr. Davidman!

Brendan Howard
Olathe, Kan.
The final pieces

KC area’s cancer initiative puzzle waits for KU Cancer Center, NCI designation to snap into place

BY ROB ROBES, STAFF WRITER

Three key pieces of the region’s cancer initiative — basic research, clinical research and drug development — are coming together around a fourth, unifying piece: the University of Kansas Cancer Center. It’s not surprising to see why that’s important.

In Kansas and Western Missouri, about 25,000 residents were diagnosed with cancer last year, and more than 16,000 died from the disease. Meanwhile, baby boomers are starting to hit their peak cancer-risk years.

“We’re looking at, over the course of the next 20 to 30 years, a doubling of our cancer cases,” said Dr. Ray Jensen, director of KU Cancer Center.

The center is preparing for that wave by piecing together a collaborative network of cancer research and clinical sites throughout Kansas and Western Missouri. By combining forces and adding shared resources to elevate the entire cancer research-to-care continuum, Jensen said, KU Cancer Center hopes to attract the final and missing piece of the puzzle: National Cancer Institute designation.

“If you look at the map of (NCI-designated) cancer centers across the country, you’ll see we’re right in the middle of a very large doughnut hole,” Jensen said. “The closest ones are in St. Louis, Omaha, Denver and Houston.”

Of course, the ultimate goal of all cancer centers is to cure cancer, and the benefits of NCI designation as a comprehensive cancer center illustrate why KU Cancer Center’s primary interim goal is to achieve such designation by 2018. The benefits will include:

• Increased regional patient access to cutting-edge cancer clinical trials.
• More than $1.3 billion in annual economic benefits in the region.
• An increase in KU Cancer Center’s annual NCI funding from the current $7.3 million to about $40 million.

Part of that estimated increase is based on the fact that NCI-affiliated institutions attract world-class researchers who bring NCI grants with them. Many of these researchers double as top-notch clinicians, adding expertise and depth in various cancer-care sub-specialties.

An example is Dr. Karen Kelly, a lung cancer researcher and KU Hospital physician. She was hired by the opportunity to help build an NCI-designated program at KU Cancer Center’s deputy director.

More than 400 Kansas traveled to the NCI-designated MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston for cancer treatment in 2006. But when area patients travel there now for lung cancer treatment, Jensen said they are told, “Thanks for coming, but why didn’t you just go see Karen Kelly?”

Scott Weis, KU Cancer Center’s drug de-
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Scott Weir, KU Cancer Center’s drug de-
FROM PAGE 13

Researcher influx is ‘the holy grail’

velopment leader, referred to the expected influx of research-oriented physicians as “the holy grail” because it will lead to promising collaborations with basic cancer researchers.

An early example is the KU Cancer Center clinical research pilot project involving Dr. Mazin Alkasspooles, a surgical oncologist at KU Hospital, and Linheng Li, a basic researcher at the Stowers Institute for Medical Research.

Li already has identified cancer stem cells – thought to be the radiation- and chemotherapy-resistant source of cancer tumors – in mice.

Now, using KU Cancer Center’s shared biospecimen resource, he and Alkasspooles are attempting to identify them in human cancer tissue. The next step will be to isolate and purify the cells for experiments aimed at disabling them in the laboratory, animals and, eventually, human trial subjects. These experiments will rely on KU Cancer Center’s potent drug-discovery shared resource.

The economic potential of such research was demonstrated earlier this year, when four experimental cancer-stem-cell antibodies developed by a small California biotech attracted a $1.4 billion licensing deal from GlaxoSmithKline.

The human potential is even greater. Although the local research team is focused on the cause and spread of esophageal and colorectal cancers, Alkasspooles said, drug targets and anticancer agents stemming from the work could be applicable to a broad range of cancers.

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The University of Kansas will host a state recognition program at 1:30 p.m. on Sunday, June 1, at the Lied Center for about 400 academically talented seventh grade students selected for the 2008 Duke University Talent Identification Program.

Selection to Duke TIP is based on college entrance exam scores that are in the top 5 percent while the students are in middle school. Students participate by taking either the SAT or ACT national achievement tests. Working with host academic institutions such as KU, Duke TIP sponsors 35 ceremonies in its 16-state talent search region.

Each Duke TIP student receives a medallion. The state recognition ceremonies honor seventh graders who have earned scores above the average scores of college-bound high school seniors. Of more than 74,000 applicants this year, 21,115 students qualified and have been invited to state recognition events, including 876 students being recognized at KU.

Duke TIP is a nonprofit educational organization that identifies and helps cultivate the talents of academically gifted youth.

Students from Augusta that have been invited to the event are Bailey A. Malm, Emily N. Mertz, and Darryl L. Ledgerwood.

Barrett Simon of Leon has also been invited.
KU title leads to big dollars in sales tax

The Associated Press

LAWRENCE — The University of Kansas men's basketball championship did more than just give fans an excuse to party.

City officials said sales tax collections for the late March and early April period have arrived and are 9 percent higher, or $160,000 greater, than during the same period a year ago.

While some of the increase may be a natural expansion of the city's economy, they said at least part of it can be linked to students, residents and visitors buying more snacks, drinks, T-shirts and other items as they celebrated the team's national championship run.

"It's definitely more than it would have been otherwise," said city finance director Ed Mullins.

City restaurant and bar owners said they certainly saw a difference during the period and took credit for some of the increase to the city's coffers.

"Our sales were over last year's total by a lot," said Doug Holiday, whose Bigg's BBQ restaurant tallied record-setting sales during the NCAA Tournament. "And the best news is: I think it is going to carry over through the summer. I think all this sport's success has really put us on the map. I think there are people who want to come back and check out Lawrence again."

Soon, the city will get additional evidence of what the championship meant when Lawrence receives its share of taxes collected on alcohol sold at bars and restaurants.

Even without the boost from the Jayhawks' championship, the city's sales tax revenue has been surprisingly strong this year.

Through the first five reporting periods, sales tax collections are up $524,000, or 5.9 percent, compared with a year ago.

Whether that continues is unknown as Mullins said consumers are increasingly pressured by rising fuel prices and the weakening real estate market.

Of particular interest to sales tax collectors, auto manufacturers have reduced their expectations for sales for the rest of the year.

"I always say you have to buy a lot of T-shirts to make up for one less vehicle being sold," Mullins said.

Holiday is more optimistic. He said that because residents and students will have less money to travel, they will increasingly look to Lawrence's entertainment-oriented businesses and spend more locally.

"Maybe they'll go to Clinton Lake instead of the Lake of the Ozarks or something like that," he said. "I think they'll still do something. You can't just go hide under a rock. You've got to have some fun."