GCCC graduation is scheduled for Saturday

By The Telegram

When more than 350 students receive diplomas and certificates at Garden City Community College, and almost 100 others get their GED diplomas, the graduates will hear from two fellow students, one of whom also is a former Garden City mayor.

The 88th GCCC graduation ceremony is scheduled for 10 a.m. Saturday in the main gym of the Dennis Perryman Athletic Complex. It will include addresses by Dennis Mesa and Ashley Fairbanks, who earned the right to speak in a campus competition, plus remarks from Merilyn Douglass, chairwoman of the GCCC Board of Trustees, and Carol Ballantyne, GCCC president.

Mesa, a former mayor who now serves as regional director for the office of U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback, began his college career in 1972. However, when he was nearly done with his degree, he dropped an algebra class to move from part-time to full-time employment.

When he learned that his one-time faculty adviser, Lee Tiberghien, would be retiring at the end of this school year, Mesa decided to re-enroll and complete his degree.

Fairbanks, who graduated from Sublette High School in 2005, has been active in campus theater, student news media and Student Government Association at GCCC, and she has taken on several leadership roles.

She plans to transfer to the University of Kansas after commencement to complete a bachelor’s degree in theater, with a minor in child development. Her goal is to develop a theater program for underprivileged children.

Saturday’s program will be followed by a reception for graduates, friends and family members in the Beth Tedrow Student Center. A pinning ceremony for GCCC nursing graduates also is planned for 3 p.m. Saturday at the Garden City Church of the Nazarene, 2720 Campus Drive.

The schedules for commencement ceremonies at Kansas’ public institutions are:

- Emporia State University — 9:30 a.m. May 17 at Welch Stadium, Emporia
- Kansas State University — K-State at Salina at 10 a.m. Saturday at the Kansas Highway Patrol Training Center Administration Building, Salina; Graduate School at 1 p.m. May 16 in Bramlage Coliseum, Manhattan; College of Veterinary Medicine at 3:30 p.m. in McCain Auditorium, Manhattan; College of Arts and Sciences at 8:30 a.m. May 17 in Bramlage Coliseum; College of Architecture, Planning and Design at 10 a.m. May 17 in McCain Auditorium; College of Education at 11 a.m. May 17 in Bramlage Coliseum; College of Agriculture at 2:15 p.m. May 17 in Bramlage Coliseum; College of Human Ecology at 4:15 p.m. May 17 in Bramlage Coliseum; College of Engineering at 6:15 p.m. May 17 in Bramlage Coliseum.
- Pittsburg State University — College of Education and College of Technology at 7:30 p.m. May 16; College of Arts & Sciences and College of Business at 10 a.m. May 17. Both ceremonies are in the John Lance Arena of the Weede Physical Education Building, Pittsburg.
- University of Kansas — 2:30 p.m. May 18, with procession on Memorial Drive, Lawrence.
- Washburn University — School of Applied Sciences at 9 a.m. May 17; School of Business and School of Nursing at 12:30 p.m. May 17; College of Arts & Sciences at 4:30 p.m. May 17; School of Law at 7:30 p.m. May 17. All ceremonies are in Lee Arena in the Petro Allied Health Center, Topeka.
- Wichita State University — Fairmount College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at 3:30 p.m. May 16; College of Health Professions at 7 p.m. May 16; W. Frank Barton School of Business at 8 a.m. May 17; College of Education at 11 a.m. May 17; College of Engineering at 2 p.m. May 17; College of Fine Arts at 4:30 p.m. May 17. All ceremonies are in the Charles Koch Arena, Wichita.
Kiowa Co. Signal
Greensburg,KS
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KU, KSU projects expand town’s unique appeal

by Kevin McClintock

And just like that, art has come to Greensburg in a big, big way. It’s unlikely a town found anywhere in the U.S. rivals Greensburg’s art choices. Both came in cubes. Both were designed and constructed by university students. Both will no doubt enhance the lives of Kiowa County residents for years to come.

The first is a more practical art than anything else – utilization and hands-on tools. The second is a more traditional interpretive art, sleek and futuristic.

Both examples show a world where green can enhance and dramatically alter lives. Like the lives currently rebuilding inside Greensburg.

5-4-7 Art Center
University of Kansas...

It’s a stunning building to look at, part wood and glass, all seamlessly meshed together into a single piece. Looking at it, it’s hard to believe the structure was shipped four hours from Wichita in pieces, where it was hauled from the back of semi trailers and stitched back together.

And people thronged to it when its official open house was held just an hour before President Bush visited Sunday.

The reception from the public, said Studio 804 Board Member Chris Ballard, “has exceeded my expectations. It’s been great.”

The building is unique for a number of reasons. First, it’s a public building, it’s bigger than previous projects and it was the farthest Studio 804 has ever traveled – 400 miles. The project also was 804’s first attempt to achieve the ultimate in sustainable building: platinum-level certification in the U.S. Green Building Council’s Leadership in Environmental and Energy Design (LEED) system.

Occupying two city-owned lots at the center of Greensburg, the center will be used for several civic purposes, including city meetings. There will be a gallery and class space.

The center used recycled material inside and out. It’s landscaped with native low-maintenance plants, uses passive solar and wind power and has a roof covered with more plants to help with cooling. And the building’s high-tech, high-efficiency geothermal heating/cooling ventilation system is drawing looks from students and professionals across the country.

“What’s amazing to me about this building it’s such a complicated building with all of these mechanical and electronic systems, but it appears to be such a beautiful and straight-forward building,” Ballard said.

The final products will feature the “Wild West” motif paintings and sculpture of Gage, Oklahoma artist, Mary Spurgeon. According to Arts Center board member Judy Kirk, different area artists will be featured on a rotating basis.

While this structure will serve primarily as a gallery, a second to be built later will feature a classroom and dance studio.

Once completed, 5-4-7 is expected to have attained LEED Platinum certification, through use of solar panels, wind turbines, geothermal heating, thermal massing and other Earth-friendly systems.

Greensburg Cubed Project
Kansas State University...

They are cubes, hence the name – 10x10x10 modular buildings, and each with a green-based practical purpose. They were built by KSU’s College of Architecture and Design, and each will serve as an “education station” informing users about green technology and products.

The first is called ICE CUBE. This cube, colored in blue and inscribed with the word “water” in different languages, serves a dual purpose. On one side is a drinking fountain, with water recycled from rainwater. On the other side are misters, which should feel just fine on those railing August afternoons. The cube educates users about water conservation techniques.

The second cube is called GREEN HAUS. Its purpose is purely educational. According to KSU student Aaron Vanderpool, “the idea is that Greensburg has made this huge commitment to build green. It’s amazing, but they’re still one or two years away from being done. So this idea is to be a teaching tool for all the materials and building types being used... and helps them find out where they can find who local distributors are.”

The third cube, RECYLING BIN, is a portable recycling bin with nearly a dozen bins – one for glass, one for plastics, one for aluminum cans, etc. “The city had a brand new facility, but it was destroyed in the tornado, so this (cube) is an interim (design) until Greensburg has the infrastructure back up and running.”

The town’s Green Club assisted the KSU students with his particular cube, and will take command of it this summer.

A fourth cube, the WATERING CAN, will make its appearance to Greensburg later this summer, and it has to do with water conservation.

All four have been under construction since mid-March.

“The big thing about all four of these cubes was to
incorporate as many different green technologies and systems as we could," Vanderpool said.

"Each one, hopefully, has a different system integrated into it."

Photo by Mark Anderson | The Signal

Studio 804 students at work on the 5.4.7 art center two weeks ago. Note the electricity generating windmills to the right.
Working to Protect Kansas Farmers and Ranchers...

Before I came back to Washington, D.C., this week, I stopped in Ellsworth to visit with a few farmers and ranchers about the farm bill. I visited John Thaemert, past President of the National Association of Wheat Growers and stopped at Ellsworth County Co-op, Citizens State Bank and the pharmacy. These discussions were beneficial in preparing for the farm bill meeting that took place later in the week.

As a member of the Farm Bill Conference Committee, I participated in a meeting that began Thursday night and ended early Friday morning. While progress was made, I was disappointed that some Representatives and Senators failed to support a series of amendments that would have helped restore the safety net that has been damaged by negotiations that occurred in closed door meetings. These meetings failed to produce a bill that will respond to the risks faced by farmers and ranchers.

Senator Pat Roberts and I offered amendments during Thursday night’s meeting to restore cuts made to direct payments, both of which failed on party line votes. We also supported an amendment that would have restored cuts to crop insurance, but it also failed on a party line vote.

Meetings next week should bring the conference to a close and a bill to the House and Senate floor. President Bush has been unclear in his intentions of signing or vetoing the farm bill. Click here to view photos of the conference committee meeting.

Joining Citizens of Greensburg for One Year Anniversary Activities...

On Saturday, I joined the citizens of Greensburg to celebrate the community’s progress in recovering from the devastation of the May 4, 2007, tornado. There are also several other communities that were affected by storms that same week.

See MORAN | page 13
end one year ago. It is good to see Kansans in areas around Macksville, Claflin and Ottawa County also moving forward after the damage from the storms.

An important sign of the recovery in Greensburg is the reopening of the Care and Share Thrift Store. It was an honor to participate in the grand opening and inspiring to know that the first business returning to Main Street is providing an important service to those in need. Thank you to pastors Marvin George, Terry Mayhew and the entire Greensburg Ministerial Alliance. The alliance and the Care and Share board of directors deserve congratulations for further restoring faith and hope to their community.

To stimulate additional growth and reconstruction, the U.S. Economic Development Administration approved $2.3 million to rebuild Main Street infrastructure. It is estimated that this funding will create 30 jobs and leverage approximately $3 million in private investment. I was pleased to take part in this funding announcement, which ensures that the Care and Share Thrift Store is only the first business to return to Greensburg’s Main Street.

I was also able to tour the 5-4-7 Arts Center with Chris Ballard. It was a pleasure to meet Professor Dan Rockhill and his Studio 804 students from the University of Kansas School of Architecture and Urban Planning. For the last 18 weeks, the students have been designing and constructing the arts center in an environmentally sustainable manner. Thank you to Dr. Rockhill and his talented group of students for donating their time and resources to bringing the arts back to Greensburg.

President Bush also returned to Greensburg this weekend to give remarks during the Greensburg High School graduation on Sunday. The citizens of Greensburg and their neighbors are an inspiration to me and people all across the state and nation. The scope of their accomplishments is amazing given the devastation they suffered just one year ago. Although challenges remain, there is no doubt that Greensburg is on its way to once again becoming a place to call home. Click here to view photos from the weekend and read more about Greensburg a year after the tornado.

Remembering the Holocaust...

It was an honor to participate in the National Commemoration of the Days of Remembrance put on by the Holocaust Memorial Museum this week. Congress established the Days of Remembrance as our nation’s annual memorial of the victims of the Holocaust. This year, I observed their memory by attending a service honoring their lives and also those of our service men and women who liberated them from the concentration camps. At the service, I had the privilege of lighting a memorial candle with Susan Taube, a Holocaust survivor. During the Holocaust, Ms. Taube was deported from her homeland of Germany to a ghetto and several concentration camps before being liberated in 1945.

Along with stories like that of Ms. Taube, those in attendance heard passionate pleas for the world to keeps its word when it said “never again” to the sort of mass killing that happened under the Nazis. Last year, I had the opportunity to visit Darfur, Sudan, where a similar type of government organized attack on its people is taking place. Click here if you would like to read an op-ed I wrote on the situation. Photos from the memorial service
can be viewed by clicking here. You can learn more about the Holocaust Memorial Museum’s effort to make sure the Holocaust is never forgotten and not allowed to be repeated in Darfur by visiting its Remembrance site at http://www.ushmm.org/remembrance/dor/ and Conscience site at http://www.ushmm.org/conscience/.

Welcoming Kansas World War II Veterans to Our Nation's Capital...
This week, I welcomed another group of Kansas World War II veterans to our nation’s capital during their visit to the World War II Memorial created in their honor. I enjoy seeing our veterans in Washington, D.C., and having the opportunity to personally thank them for their sacrifices that we as a country still benefit from. I appreciate the efforts of the Honor Flight program and Bill Patterson of Lyndon for organizing this trip for these Kansas heroes. There were 37 veterans from the eastern half of the state and 13 students from Lyndon High School assisting them during the trip. Click here to view photos from the visit.

Participating in National Day of Prayer Event...
On Thursday, I joined people of all faiths across the country in observing the National Day of Prayer. Since 1952, Americans from different religious backgrounds have come together on the first Thursday of May to pray for the wellbeing of the United States and those in leadership roles. I marked this year’s holiday by attending a prayer and worship service in our nation’s capital.

Whether in times of uncertainty, grief or joy, prayer has the power to comfort. Prayer has strengthened me many times as I have sought guidance as an elected official. The prayer service brought Members of Congress from both parties together for a time of reverence and reflection.

Speaking to Farm Broadcasters...
I spoke to the National Association of Farm Broadcasters while they were in our nation’s capital this week for the organization’s annual Washington Watch. It was good to see regional and Kansas broadcasters Greg Akagi of WIBW Radio in Topeka, John Jenkinson of Golden Plains Agriculture Network in Lakin and Tom Brand of Eagle Communications in St. Joe, Missouri. Earlier in the week, Senator Pat Roberts and I joined up to provide an update to Kansas media about the farm bill. Click here to listen to our news teleconference.

Visiting Soldiers at Irwin Army Community Hospital at Fort Riley...
On Monday, I visited Fort Riley to visit with the leadership of Irwin Army Community Hospital and the Warrior Transition Battalion. While there, I toured the Soldier and Family Assistance Center and met with several soldiers who are currently recovering from injuries.

I wanted to see how things are going at Fort Riley and see the growth since my last visit in September. When I last visited, Fort Riley was serving 75 soldiers in the Warrior Transition Unit. There are now more than 400. Construction on a new complex that will house 200 barrack rooms for the Warrior Unit is scheduled to begin this year.

Thanks to Commanding General Robert Durbin, Colonel Lee Meritt and Colonel Dawn Smith for their time visiting with me and showing me around the facilities. The good work and attention to care by this leadership team and others at Fort Riley is evident when visiting with soldiers and touring the facilities.

Attending Salina Rotary and Visiting Tony's Pizza in Salina...
I visited the Tony's Pizza plant in Salina this week to learn more about the company and the products they make. Schwan Food Company makes Tony's Pizza and
the Salina plant employs around 1,700 Kansans. Last year, the plant used more than 138 million pounds of flour and 92 million pounds of cheese. Thanks to Al Schwan for the tour.

Before visiting Tony’s Pizza, I attended the Salina Rotary Club noon meeting where Mike Hoppock and North McCarther presented the program. Thanks to Wendell Nickel for hosting me.

**Speaking at MidAmerica Nazarene University Commencement...**

On Sunday, I spoke at the commencement ceremony for the 2008 graduating class of MidAmerica Nazarene College in Olathe. I wish all 217 graduating seniors much continued success and happiness. Thanks to President Edwin Robinson and Reverend Dwight Douglas for the invitation to speak.

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**Photo by Janet West**

Professor Dan Rockhill speaking at Sunday’s grand opening of the 5.4.7 art center.
Relay For Life

It brings men, women and children together for an overnight gathering of celebration and remembrance. It raises funds for the fight against cancer, a disease that will affect one in two Americans in their lifetime.

Relay for Life, the American Cancer Society signature activity, is happening June 13-14 at Wright Park, Dodge City. This year nearly three million relay participants in 4,200 communities across the country will raise millions of dollars to fuel the mission of eliminating cancer through research, education, advocacy and patient services.

Here are a few examples of what happens when you support the Relay for Life.

Finding a cure. To date the American Cancer Society has spent $3 billion on research. That research has led to advances such as bone marrow transplant, the use of drugs on certain cancers and the Pap smear crusade that educates women on the importance of early detection of cervical cancer and saved the lives of many people with cancer. In 2007, more than $3.3 million in grants went to cancer research at the University of Kansas, the University of Kansas Medical Center, and Kansas State University.

Spreading the word. Volunteers with the ACS Ford County Council educate their friends, neighbors and family about cancer prevention and early detection by way of health fairs and breast cancer awareness luncheons.

Calling for change. Society volunteers advocate work with elected officials to make cancer issues a priority. Their work helped expand insurance coverage for cancer screenings and put more money into cancer research to find a cure.

Lending support. Knowing the facts and having resources to get through treatment and recovery are essential. Available day or night through the society’s 800-ACS-2345 phone number, and people can use the website www.cancer.org.

"The American Cancer Society spends the funds raised through Relay for Life on research, education advocacy and patient service efforts that benefit everyone in the community," said Pat Shrader, ACS Ford County Council President / Kansas Ambassador. For more information contact Pat at 620-227-7277.
LAWRENCE, Kan. (AP)—A University of Kansas professor, political blogger and author is scheduled to sit down with Jon Stewart on “The Daily Show” to discuss his latest book.

Journalism professor David Perlmutter is booked to be a guest Thursday night on Stewart’s popular Comedy Central show. They’ll discuss political blogging and Perlmutter’s new book “Blogwars: The New Political Battleground.”

The book is an examination of the history of blogs and their effect on politics.

Perlmutter writes his own blog at policybyblog.squarespace.com.

He’s also associate dean for graduate studies and research at Kansas.
Restoring Monarch habitat

By Cristina Janney
Newton Kansan

HESSTON — When people think of threatened species, they might think of a bald eagle or a polar bear and not the delicate and seemingly abundant Monarch butterfly.

However, habitat destruction in the United States and Mexico, as well as global warming, are resulting in decreased numbers of these butterflies.

Chip Taylor, director of Monarch Watch and entomologist at The University of Kansas, recently gave a presentation on the need to conserve Monarch habitat at the Dyck Arboretum of the Plains in Hesston.

Habitat is important to butterflies because they make an annual migration from the United States and Canada to wintering sites in central Mexico.

Butterflies in southern Canada begin their migration in late August. They are joined by millions more butterflies mostly in the central United States on their way south to Mexico.

They fly four or five hours a day, stop, feed on nectar, rest for the night and fly in the morning further south.

A monarch might fly 25 to 30 miles per day, but also must feed on enough nectar along the way to sustain itself in the overwintering site until spring, Taylor said.

They overwinter in the fir trees of El Canpanario and about nine other mountain tops west of Mexico City where the temperatures remain above freezing but remain cool enough the butterflies can conserve precious energy.

The butterflies gather in the millions there — sometimes 25 million individuals per acre, Taylor said.

But the fir forests are being cut down, some by illegal commercial loggers and some by local people trying to subsist. The average income in the areas is about $10 a day.

“We have already found three sites that are inadequate,” Taylor said. “The butterflies are dying in the millions.”

A monarch reserve has been established in Mexico, but Taylor said he fears the illegal logging may soon encroach on these protected areas.

Taylor said a $20 million to $30 million foundation needs to be created to encourage the local Mexican population to plant trees.

“One way to save the Monarch is to put people to work,” he said.

In late February, the butterflies begin their migration north. They will begin breeding when they find their host plant, milkweed, in Texas.

The cool temperatures in Texas this year have made it a good year for butterflies, Taylor said.

It may take several generations of the butterflies before they extend their range into Canada and are ready for the fall return migration.

The term host plant is butterfly lingo for the plants that butterflies caterpillars eat.

For the monarch, it is only types of milkweed.

Eating the milkweed makes the butterflies toxic to birds and other predators.

The problem is development of subdivisions, factories and shopping centers in the United States are destroying native prairie landscapes where milkweed would grow at a rate of 6,000 acres a day. That is an area roughly the size of Lawrence.

“We are not doing enough for our wildlife,” Taylor said. “We
Common Milkweed is a host plant for Monarch butterflies. The adult butterflies feed on nectar of the plant and lay eggs on the plant. The caterpillars eat the leaves of the plant, which make the adults toxic to predators.

Native plant sale

Where: Dyck Arboretum of the Plains in Hesston is having its FloraKansas Native Plant Sale.

When: 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, noon to 4 p.m. Sunday and 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. May 12

Monarch talk: There will be a talk on Monarchs and Monarch Waystations at 9:30 a.m. Saturday at the arboretum.

For more information

For more information on the native plant sale, call (620) 327-8127

For more information on Monarch Watch or Monarch Waystations, go to www.monarch-watch.org.
Monarchs on the mind

One Monarch butterfly may fly as much as 8,000 miles during its migration cycle.

Monarchs are losing habitat at the rate of 6,000 acres per day, roughly the size of Lawrence.

A monarch might fly 25 to 30 miles per day during its migration.

An estimated 10,000 Monarch Waystation sites per year would have to be created to keep up habitat loss.

A monarch weighs between .5 and .9 grams.
Monarchs

Continued from page 1A

are not going to stop development, but we could be smarter and make adjustments in our landscapes to provide habitat.”

Another threat to Monarch habitat is the use of Roundup herbicide.

Although Monarchs are common in Kansas, they are most plentiful in the corn belt. They can be found in high concentration in corn fields, which support enough of the milkweed “weed” to feed large populations of monarchs. An estimated 90 percent of the nation’s native milkweed occurs in agricultural landscapes.

Taylor said not enough milkweed grows in the corn to hurt yields. However, the use of Roundup kills all the milkweed.

Monarchs not only need pockets of milkweed to breed in the spring and summer but they need it and other nectar-producing plants as “waystations” on their long migration to Mexico in the fall.

The University of Kansas’ Monarch Watch program, which is dedicated to research and conservation of Monarchs, has established the Monarch Waystation Program.

People are encouraged to plant milkweed and other native nectar-producing plants on their land, farm ground or yards as spring and summer breeding areas and pit stops for the butterflies during their fall migrations.

“You can have a lot of fun with these type of gardens by providing the right kind of resources,” Taylor said.

However, the Monarch Waystation project may only take a bite out of the habitat loss problem. An estimated 10,000 of these sites per year would have to be created to keep up habitat loss.

Taylor said he is working with states to create roadside habitats for the butterflies.

“We are just going to get the public to stop complaining about the roadsides not being perfectly mowed like their front lawns,” he said.
Two intermodal facilities planned for the Kansas City area will do more than process tons of freight. They promise to create and attract a ton of jobs.

Officials estimate a Burlington Northern Santa Fe intermodal park near Gardner will bring 7,500 new jobs.

"Those will be jobs that are everything from crane operators to maintenance people to logistics to, I would imagine, some computer and inventory people to ensure everything is where it's supposed to be," said Tom Riederer, director of Southwest Johnson County Economic Development Corp.

The CenterPoint-KCS Intermodal Center, now being developed at the site of the former Richards-Gebaur Memorial Airport in Kansas City, also promises to bring many and diverse jobs.

Mark Long of the Zimmer Cos., a local broker for the project, said the work force in south Kansas City and surrounding cities was a primary factor in locating the intermodal facility and will play a big role in its success.

"If you've ever been in a major distribution center, there's a lot going on," he said. "There's a lot of responsibility for the daily handling of all of those goods and materials that come in and out of those properties. There will be very high-tech material handling equipment that people will need to be trained on. There will be IT positions for systems that track inventories. There will be call centers in most of them, where they are doing order and inventory and tracking of that nature."

Some area colleges and universities have begun to consider expanding or adding logistics and supply-chain management classes in an effort to fill the upcoming need for such positions.

Alphonso Ogbuehi, dean of Park University's School of Business and Management, said recruiters visiting the campus have talked about their need for people with supply-chain management skills. Park offers a few logistics courses and is looking at "beefing up" those offerings, Ogbuehi said, but there is not yet a plan.

Bill Osborn, dean of community outreach for Johnson County Community College, said he is unaware of any push from the community to expand the school's supply-chain management offerings. But the school's proximity to the BNSF facility site could be all the push that's needed.

"I doubt that we'll wait to be asked," Osborn said. "We'll probably do some needs assessments and see if we can't establish some possibilities while that facility is being formed."

Faculty at the University of Kansas School of Business has begun to put to-
together course work for a supply-chain management degree, which will launch in the fall of 2009, said Doug Houston, director of the school's finance, economics and decision sciences program. Students will take core business courses, he said, and then have 21 hours of course work specifically geared toward the major.

About 20 or 25 students are interested in the degree, he said.

"I wish that number were higher, and I think it should be higher, given the demand," Houston said. "You can always overstate something, but I think the supply chain, it's one of those imperatives that if you don't do it well, in most industries that are competitive, you don't have much future."

Park University's Ogbuehi said the trick for schools is to get students interested in the field.

"One of the things that I find in logistics and supply chain is it's not sexy," he said. "Yet it is so critical. If the Kansas City area is going to embrace this area as a growth industry, we have to be able to provide this talent that is needed to take the industry forward."

Perhaps the average pay can provide incentive for students. The Council for Supply Chain Management Professionals lists the average base pay plus incentives for a lower-level position at $50,000. A middle-level job averages $74,400, and a top executive position would have an average pay of $253,800.

Morgan Chilson | Chilson is a freelance writer in the Kansas City area.
Google Inc. has donated $100,000 to help University of Kansas architecture students design and build sustainable structures, including one of the first new “green” buildings in Greensburg, Kan.

Greensburg was all but destroyed by an EF-5 tornado in 2007. The town's new Arts Center, named for the date of the disaster, was designed and built by students in Studio 804, a graduate-level design/build program at the KU School of Architecture and Urban Planning. The arts center opens on Sunday, the anniversary of the tornado.

| Maré Rose Williams, mdwilliams@kcstar.com |
Lawmakers suggest tax exemption

Opposition claims proposal's numbers are incorrect

By James Carlson
THE CAPITAL-JOURNAL

As lawmakers squeeze the budget belt one notch tighter, two Topeka lawmakers have called for "decoupling" the state from a federal tax code for one year, possibly saving $79 million.

A federal stimulus package passed by Congress this year will reduce state revenues by $87 million over the next two years, mostly in the form of reduced tax receipts from businesses.

Ann Mah, D-Topeka and Laura Kelly, D-Topeka, say the Legislature should exempt the state from the business tax codes that would remove that funding.

"It is no time to be giving an unexpected windfall to businesses when we have important things we need to fund," Kelly said.

But opponents say those numbers aren't taking into account the sales tax accumulated from Kansas residents spending the tax rebate checks sent out in conjunction with the stimulus package.

"There's an offset that could potentially erase the negative," said Alan Cobb, state director of the anti-tax group Americans for Prosperity.

Kansas began looking at the issue after the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, a liberal Washington organization tracking budget issues, estimated two business tax adjustments at the core of the federal strategy would cost 36 states a collective $3.9 billion in revenue. The one-year loss in Kansas totals $87 million, according to the center's analysis and a subsequent assessment by KDOR.

The bulk of the hit to Kansas — approximately $79 million — would result from allowing businesses to depreciate 50 percent of the cost of new equipment and machinery in the first year rather than over several years.

A bill sitting in the Kansas Senate would exempt the state from that business tax code for one year, maintaining the $79 million in revenue that would be lost with the increased allowable depreciation.

Mah and Kelly pointed to the upcoming budget shortfalls in Kansas, where projections show the state hundreds of millions of dollars in debt by 2011. In an effort to address that issue, the Senate last week took the drastic step of cutting most of its wrap-up budget, including only K-12 funding and dollars for Medicaid caseloads.

The state is teetering close to dipping below a $100 million ending balance, which would trigger across-the-board spending cuts. Mah said important issues like funding for disabled children and elderly adults is in question because state budget woes, and the decoupling bill would help.

"We have all these things we need to do, and we're scared to do it because we thought it was more important to give a $79 million gift to the state chamber," Mah said.

For the state, the larger depreciation deductions in one year mean small depreciation deductions in future years, so the revenue loss is neutralized in the future, said Arthur Hall, executive director of the Center for Applied Economics at The University of Kansas, in written testimony to a House tax committee earlier this year.

Kelly said she understands the lost revenue will equal out but said the state needs the money now.

"We just happen to be in a budget year when we can't afford that," she said.

Cobb said some of the impact would be offset by Kansas residents spending their rebate checks.

Richard Cram, with KDOR, estimated of the $1.1 billion coming to Kansans in the form of rebate checks, they will spend approximately $173 million, generating $8 million in tax receipts.

Cobb questioned those numbers.

"Of the more than $1 billion coming in, they're only going to spend ($173 million)?" he asked. "That's just not plausible."

James Carlson can be reached 32729-05-06_1003
Google invests in KU studio

LAWRENCE — Internet company Google has made a $100,000 gift to help The University of Kansas architecture students design and build sustainable structures, including one of the first new "green" buildings in Greensburg.

Greensburg made international news after the city was devastated by an EF-5 tornado in 2007. The town's new 5.4.7 Arts Center, named for the date of the disaster, was designed and built by students in Studio 804, the capstone course of the graduate-level design and build program at the KU School of Architecture and Urban Planning. The building opened Sunday.

The Capital-Journal

Count: Shawnee
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