Regents OK background checks

By The Associated Press

TOPEKA — The Kansas Board of Regents has approved a policy allowing criminal background checks for job applicants at the state's six universities.

The new policy is being adopted after the discovery of several convicted felons working in a department at the University of Kansas.

The policy adopted Wednesday makes exceptions for student and temporary workers, but all other new employees are subject to criminal background checks. That includes a review of the sex offender registry.

The policy is modeled after a one used for years at KU Medical Center. The policy discussion began after reports in news media, including a Lawrence Journal-World investigation that discovered a number of convicted felons working in one University of Kansas department.

KU Provost Richard Lariviére was a dean at University of Texas-Austin when a similar system was launched.

"It caused a considerable amount of angst from faculty and administrators when we implemented it, but ultimately it didn't cause any more difficulty in recruiting," he said.

At Pittsburg State and Fort Hays State universities, the issue of background checks may have to be part of negotiations with the faculty union.

"My bigger concern, though, is our international faculty and how we do background checks on people who aren't even in this country," said Ed Hammond, Fort Hays president.

Regent Gary Sherrer said if universities encounter obstacles they cannot solve by September, adjustments could be made.

The regents also approved a policy prohibiting weapons on campus, including paintball guns, explosives or poison gas, longbows, crossbows and knives.
University of Kansas
Thirty-four students were inducted into the Gamma chapter of Pi Sigma Alpha, a national political science honor society in April at the University of Kansas, Lawrence.

Area inductees include, Aaron Keller, Halstead, Julia Groebelacher, Amelia Yowell-Mays, both of McPherson.
Forty-eight students were recently initiated into Mortar Board, a senior honor society at the University of Kansas, Lawrence. Area initiates include Bradford Cardonell, Tribune, Courtney Brax, Aunya Brown, and Preston Schraeder, all of
LOCAL STUDENT AMONG KU ‘CORDED’

GOLD CORDS MARK HONORS SENIORS’ ACHIEVEMENTS

Special to The Daily Union

LAWRENCE — The University of Kansas Honors Program commended more than 150 graduating students, including a Junction City student, at a Saturday ceremony at the Crafton-Preyer Theatre in Murphy Hall.

Joseph Andrew Pinaire, son of Richard and Margie Pinaire, was among the students honored. He earned a senior gold cord for completing communication studies for a bachelor of arts degree. He is a graduate of Junction City High School.

The ceremony recognized KU seniors who have completed the University Honors Program and the University Scholars Program, in which students participate during their sophomore year. During the ceremony, students receive gold cords to wear during commencement activities.

Students participating in the ceremony included those who graduated in summer and fall 2007 and those who will graduate in spring 2008. The university formal commencement takes place at 2:30 p.m. today in Memorial Stadium.

University Honors Program students must complete a freshman tutorial and a combination of honors courses and out-of-classroom experiences, such as study abroad, internships, community service or undergraduate research to graduate from the program. Students must also maintain a minimum 3.25 grade-point average.

Located in Nunemaker Center, the program provides academic advising and information regarding the many opportunities at KU. Honors students may enroll in honors courses, which are small, discussion-based and emphasize writing and research. Honors students are encouraged to participate in cultural and social activities as well as community service.

Honors students also are encouraged to work on research projects and to apply for scholarships, internships or fellowships.

Each year, undergraduate awards are available through the University Honors Program, providing funds for research projects conducted with a faculty mentor. Students compete twice a year for these undergraduate research grants.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3A
The first Mary Lea Johanning Scholarship awards were presented Thursday night at the annual Atchison High School Awards ceremony. The scholarships are made available by contributions in honor of the 27-year-old young woman who fought a courageous battle against kidney cancer until October 2007.

Mary Lea was a 1999 graduate of Atchison High School and obtained two degrees from Kansas University on her way to becoming a school psychologist. The awards, given to young women enrolling at Kansas University, are based on their attributes that most nearly emulate Mary Lea's spirit, drive and motivation.

This year's winners of the scholarship are Elise Grace Broaddus and Rebecca Lynn Campbell. These young ladies have shown themselves to be persons of integrity, scholarship and excellence in all areas of life.

Contributions may be directed to: Mary Lea Johanning Scholarship, 1704 North Second, Atchison, KS.
University of Kansas

LAWRENCE — The names of more than 4,450 candidates for degrees at the University of Kansas this spring — representing 95 Kansas counties, 48 other states and the District of Columbia and 44 other countries — have been announced by the University Registrar.

KU’s Class of 2008 numbers more than 7,000, including 2,555 who completed degree work in summer and fall 2007. Because KU conducts only one formal commencement ceremony each year, many of these candidates for degrees will return Sunday, May 18, for the university’s 136th commencement procession into Memorial Stadium. More than 4,000 members of the Class of 2008 are expected to participate.

Faculty and candidates for degrees will assemble about 2 p.m. along Memorial Drive for the procession, which begins at 2:30 p.m. The program begins about 3:30 p.m. In case of inclement weather, participants should call KU Info, (785) 864-3506, or listen to local radio and television stations to learn the exact time of the commencement ceremony. Commencement information and an up-to-date schedule of events are available online at www.commencement.ku.edu.

Area students, their degree and spouse or parent information are listed:

Humboldt — Michael Hunter Miller, son of Kenneth and Cheryl Miller, Health & Physical Education BSE.

Chanute — Chanute Audrey Renee Kennedy, daughter of Joseph Stich, Pharmacy PD; Janae Lynn Maher, Medicine MD; of 1 Erica Ann Mildfelt, daughter of Dan and Lisa Mildfelt, Nursing BSN; Chase Jacob Reed, son of Vickie Reed, Elementary Education BSE; Ashley S Robbins, daughter of Benny and Linda Robbins, Medicine MD.

Erie — Jânelle Lynn Buskirk, daughter of Timothy and Connie Buskirk, Nursing BSN; Levi J Gahman, Geography MA; Tracy Renee Spielbusch, daughter of Edward and Kimberly Spielbusch, Elementary Education BSE.

Galesburg — Chésha Lynn Miller, daughter of Daniel and Tammy Miller, Accounting and Info Systems MAS.

Thayer — Erin Jean Cox, daughter of Gene and Susan Cox, Social Work BSW; Katie Maria Holtzman, daughter of Sherrie Brant, Physical Therapy DPT; Katie Maria Holtzman, daughter of Jerry and Sherrie Brant, Physical Therapy DPT; Lorena May Spratt, daughter of Robert Leck, Physical Therapy DPT.

Altoona — Christine Meryl Jones, daughter of Janiece Erbe, Nursing BSN,

Yates Center — Andrew Stark, son of Ronald and Judith Stark, East Asian Language and Cultures.

Chanute High School — Benjamin Huntington, Overland Park, Economics BS; Julie Ann Grindol, Shawnee; PharmacyPD.
It's one of those good news, bad news stories.

The good news is that Washburn University students benefited from an additional $500,000 in scholarships this year. The bad news is that they weren't supposed to and Washburn overspent its general fund budget by $500,000.

"It happened this year, and it isn't going to happen again," said Washburn President Jerry Farley, who told the Washburn Board of Regents about the problem during their meeting Friday.

The mistake occurred when corners were cut in an attempt to notify scholarship recipients of their awards sooner.

Students may benefit from scholarships paid for by several funding sources. In addition to the university's general fund dollars, there are hundreds of privately funded accounts for scholarships. In the past, the university's financial aid office has carefully matched each scholarship recipient with the multiple funding sources.

But during the past school year, that process was initially skipped. A larger account was established to track overall awards, but the university wound up handing out too many scholarships.

"It appears that no resources have been misappropriated, and no defalcation has occurred," Farley wrote to regents.

The dollars never actually left the university's hands as they were applied to student accounts. The error became obvious in January when it was clear too many general fund dollars had been spent, he said.

Since then, Farley said, procedures have been put in place to ensure scholarships can't be awarded beyond the university's overall budget. And the university is calling in external auditors to evaluate mistakes that occurred and how they can be prevented in

Please see WASHBURN, Page 9A
The university awards more than $6 million in scholarships each year. Of those, about $4.5 million are privately funded. Less than $2 million comes from the university's general fund.

The unexpected hit to the general fund was absorbed this year with contingency dollars, Farley said. The university plans to replenish those contingency dollars next school year.

Increase approved

Regents approved tuition increases of 6.5 percent, raising the per credit hour cost for undergraduate tuition to $197. Law school tuition increased more than 9 percent to $525 per credit hour for in-state residents.

The university will spend more on health insurance, utilities, minimum wage requirements and the successful debate and mock trial programs. At the same time, Washburn will do some belt tightening, amounting to about $700,000.

Despite the tuition increase, Washburn has become an increasingly cost-effective alternative to neighboring Kansas State University and The University of Kansas. For the first time, Washburn's tuition and fees this school year were lower than the larger universities. While Washburn's tuition and fees have climbed 85 percent during the past 10 years, tuition at KU and K-State has shot up 177 and 153 percent, respectively.

More building

Regents gave the nod to a $7 million project that would create additional space for athletics and academics in Whiting Field House, where the Ichabods once played their basketball games.

A large weight room, for both athletic teams and physical education classes would be added at the current floor level. Over it, a new basketball floor would be added, which also could be used by sports teams and P.E. classes. Around the outer edges, where seats are now, classrooms and offices for the university's expanding nursing program would be added.

After years of large building projects, regents chairman Bob Storey said the university might be ready to slow down.

"We've said that every year, but I think we will slow down on projects," Farley said later.
Planned rise in tuition is lower, but still high

- Universities' proposed hikes lowest in several years, but some top 6 percent.

**By Chris Green**

Harris News Service
cgreen@dailynews.net

TOPEKA - State universities generally asked for the lowest percentage tuition increases in several years Thursday.

But some of the hikes wouldn't be as low as higher education leaders had initially hoped.

Officials from the state's six public universities outlined their proposals for increasing tuition and fees beginning next fall to the state Board of Regents, which could take a final vote on the requests in June.

But some students at the University of Kansas and Kansas State University could face jumps exceeding 6 percent, the rate of increase in tuition that regents said they preferred to keep hikes below in February.

As a result, some board members reiterated their concerns about whether the state could make a university education too costly for many Kansans to afford.

"There are kids out there where it's not a matter of (giving up) a latte as to whether they get a college education," said Regent Gary Sherrer of Overland Park, a former lieutenant governor to Bill Graves.

The funding would bring in millions of additional dollars to help state universities accomplish tasks like offsetting rising energy costs and boosting salaries to recruit and keep top-notch faculty members.

Board Chairwoman Christine Downey-Schmidt of Inman said college proposals are valuable to students and ensuring that the state's universities have the resources they need to excel should also be a consideration for board members.

The steepest proposed increase would be for incoming resident freshmen attending the University of Kansas, who would pay 9 percent more in tuition and fees than this year's crop of resident freshmen.

However, because they would be the second consecutive class to enter under KU's guaranteed tuition compact, they would receive the same tuition rate for four years.

KU sophomores would see no increase this year under that compact while juniors and seniors would see their tuition and fees go up about 6.7 percent.

In addition, Kansas State University wants to boost charges on juniors and seniors at its Manhattan campus by about 7.5 percent, giving them a higher tuition rate than underclassmen, who'd see a 5 percent jump.

Tom Rawson, K-State's vice president for administration and finance, said the move would implement a three-tier pricing structure at the university, a first at a Kansas public university.

Under the system, college freshmen and sophomores would pay the lowest rate while graduate students would pay the highest. Juniors and seniors, whose classes can often involve more expensive laboratory work, would fall in the middle.

The university's Salina campus, which focuses on technology and aviation, would also feature a three-tier system of its own.

Pre-college students taking courses would receive a newly created tuition rate, $100 per credit hour. Underclassmen would see no increases in tuition and fees next year, while upperclassmen would pay about 1.6 percent more than at present.

Shouldering the burden?

Most of the proposals made to the board fell well below the percentage increases proposed in recent years.

Since 2002, in-state tuition and fees have more than doubled at the University of Kansas and Kansas State University. Increases at the state's other schools - Wichita State, Emporia State, Pittsburg State and Fort Hays State - have averaged at least 8 percent a year.

Officials from four schools - K-State, Fort Hays State, Wichita State and Emporia State - initially submitted proposed tuition increases that would have bolstered tuition by 5 percent or less for in-state undergraduates.

But those proposals were mapped out on the expectation that lawmakers would provide higher education with the additional $35 million Gov. Kathleen Sebelius suggested in her budget.

Lawmakers did increase funding for colleges and universities but came up about $10 million short of what Sebelius had proposed.

Fort Hays State President Edward Hammond said that the Legislature's decision left his institution with no choice but to raise its proposed increase for in-state undergraduates from 4.5 percent to 5.5 percent, including tuition and fees.

Pittsburg State proposed a hike in undergraduate tuition and fees of 6.5 percent, while Emporia State projected an increase in those charges that ranged from 5.3 percent to 5.7 percent.

Wichita State projected it would be asking for an increase of about 5.8 percent, including both tuition and fees.

Board Vice Chairwoman Donna Shank of Liberal noted that higher education officials did receive an increase in state funding over last year, although not as much as they had wanted.

While universities clearly have needs, she said the proposed tuition increases were also coming during a time when many people in the state are facing a tough economy and the prospect of cutting back.

"I guess the issue is who's going to shoulder that burden," Shank said.
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UNIVERSITIES SEEK TO RAISE TUITION UP TO 8.7 PERCENT

By JOHN HANNA
The Associated Press

TOPEKA — Tuition would increase this fall by as much as 8.7 percent at the state’s six universities under proposals their top officials outlined Thursday.

The changes would raise at least $22 million during the next academic year, and officials told the Kansas Board of Regents that their universities need the new dollars to provide adequate pay raises and sustain existing programs. The board, which oversees the state’s higher education system, plans to vote on the proposals next month.

The largest percentage increases would be in the tuition charged to some incoming freshmen at the University of Kansas and to some juniors and seniors at Kansas State University. But some students at both institutions would see no increase in what they pay.

University of Kansas officials asked the regents to continue a program under which incoming freshmen are guaranteed the same tuition for four years. Kansas State proposed, for the first time, charging juniors and seniors more than it charges freshmen and sophomores.

The board wasn’t entirely pleased with the proposals. The regents strongly suggested in February that the universities seek increases of 6 percent or less, and a few of the changes suggested went beyond that mark.

“For six years now, we have had huge tuition increases,” former Lt. Gov. Gary Sherrer, a regent from Overland Park, said during a break. “In this economy, my personal belief is that you do not want to start shutting the doors of your universities based on ability to pay.”

Some of the proposals remained fluid. Officials at four universities — Emporia State, Fort Hays State, Kansas State and Wichita State — said they would have to revise their plans to include larger increases. They blamed the Legislature’s decision to appropriate $10 million less for their operating budgets than Gov. Kathleen Sebelius had proposed.

Several regents, including Sherrer, expressed frustration with the universities’ criticism of legislators.

Regent Donna Shank, of Liberal, suggested that universities consider trimming their spending.

“We are in a tough economy right now,” she said. “Everyone is having to cut back right now. Do we put all that burden on the backs of the students?”

Adam McGonigle, student body president at the University of Kansas, said it’s important to keep tuition under control. But he acknowledged that students expect to see modest increases.

“The cost of living goes up every year,” he said. “The cost of an education goes up as well.”

The largest increases at the University of Kansas are driven by its “compact” program, in which the university sets a single tuition rate for incoming freshmen for four years. The program started last year, and university officials pitched it as protection for families against large tuition increases.

Calculating the rate each year is complicated because the university attempts to cover some potential increases in its costs.

The rate charged to incoming freshmen who participate in the fall will be 8.6 percent or 8.7 percent higher than the rate for those who enrolled last year. But both groups — about 30 percent of all University of Kansas students — wouldn’t see any increase in 2009-10.

For other University of
Kansas students, tuition will increase 6 percent.  
“There is inevitably a crystal ball element to this,” said Provost Richard Lariviere.  
At Wichita State, tuition would increase 5.9 percent for students from Kansas but only 5 percent for non-Kansans so that it would remain competitive with out-of-state schools, its officials said. Fort Hays State proposed tuition increases of 5.5 percent.  
Tuition at Pittsburg State would increase by up to 5.8 percent. Officials at Emporia State didn’t have final figures, but students there are likely to see increases of between 4.9 percent and 6 percent.  
Kansas State proposed no increase for freshmen and sophomores on its Salina campus, which emphasizes technology. For other students, the increase would range from 1.9 percent to 7.4 percent.  
The biggest jump would be in the tuition charged to juniors and seniors from outside Kansas attending classes on its Manhattan campus.  
If the regents accept Kansas State’s proposal, it would be the only state university to charge different rates to freshmen and sophomores than to juniors and seniors. But Tom Rawson, vice president of administration and finance, noted that lower-level classes tend to be larger and emphasize lectures over lab work.  
“There really are some differences in cost,” he said.