Kansas governor’s higher education budget plan raises tuition fears

BY JOHN HANNA
Associated Press

TOPEKA — Students and state officials worried Wednesday that budget cuts sought by Gov. Kathleen Sebelius would force Kansas’ public universities and colleges into big tuition increases to protect their programs.

Sebelius proposes to cut nearly $25 million from the current operating budgets of universities, community colleges and technical colleges, and an additional $56 million in the next fiscal year. The campuses also would lose funds promised for maintenance projects.

The campuses would lose 9 percent of their state tax dollars in the current and next fiscal years. The proposed reductions are part of Sebelius’ larger plan to eliminate a projected $186 million deficit in the current budget and avert a projected shortfall of more than $1 billion for fiscal 2010, which starts July 1.

Some Republican legislators contend the Democratic governor’s budget proposals unfairly target higher education for deep cuts. Legislators of both parties and higher education officials also believe pressure will build on the state Board of Regents to raise tuition to prevent the effects from being felt in classrooms.

“We’re just starting to talk about that sort of impact,” said Kansas State University student body president Lydia Peele, a senior from Olathe. “We don’t want to price out our students.”

Anticipating mandated cuts in their current budgets, universities and colleges already have frozen most hiring, delayed buying equipment and tried to reduce travel expenses.

Officials of the schools warned Sebelius’ staff in November that another round of cuts could force them to eliminate staff. They’re also likely to look toward shifting money from maintenance and other operating costs into academic programs.

“The classroom always comes first,” said University of Kansas Chancellor Robert Hemenway. “You go back to first principles whenever you’re dealing with a budget cut, and the first principle for an educational system like the regents system is educating the students.”

Legislators allocated almost $853 million worth of state tax dollars to the higher education system when they approved the current budget last year. Sebelius’ plan would trim that to $830 million, or by 2.7 percent. The figure would drop to $773 million — an additional 6.8 percent — for fiscal 2010.

Budget Director Duane Goosen acknowledged the cuts are significant but said higher education isn’t being singled out.

“The budget is tough on everybody,” Goosen said. “Nobody escapes this.”

But Sebelius proposed only a freeze in aid to public schools and attempted to keep most social service programs intact.

“When people ask me who is taking it on the chin in the governor’s budget, I usually remark, ‘the regents,’” said House Appropriations Committee Chairman Kevin Yoder, an Overland Park Republican. “If the governor’s cuts are successful, we will probably see dramatic tuition increases.”

The Board of Regents, has sometimes used its power to set tuition rates without oversight from the governor or Legislature to fill in budget gaps.

Over the past decade, for example, tuition at the six Regents universities has increased an average of 122 percent for full-time, undergraduate students from Kansas. In recent years, the regents have tried to hold down increases so that higher education remains affordable.
When you think of university research having practical applications, think of Kansas University researcher Bob Honea.

Honea and his colleagues at KU’s Transportation Research Institute are gathering data on how often cell phones and other wireless devices are in use when traffic accidents occur. It is their hope that the statistics will provide the basis for new laws regarding cell-phone use by drivers.

As Honea notes, it doesn’t take a scientist to realize that sending and receiving text messages while driving is a bad idea. “It’s a no-brainer,” he said. But when it comes to making laws, officials need more than intuition or anecdotes; they need hard numbers. That’s what the researchers are trying to provide.

The researchers contend that the involvement of cell phones and wireless devices currently is drastically underreported by law-enforcement personnel. Even so, the devices are blamed for 2,600 deaths and 330,000 injuries a year.

Those numbers are pretty dramatic, but if the researchers can show the actual number of injuries and fatalities is even higher, this issue might finally get the public attention it deserves.
Native Sons & Daughters to Honor Coach, Former U.S. Ambassador & Greensburg Mayor

Bill Self, University of Kansas head men’s basketball coach, will be honored as Distinguished Kansan of the Year at the 91st annual Native Sons and Daughters of Kansas banquet Friday, Jan. 30 at Maner Conference Center, Kansas Expocentre, Topeka.

Recognized as Kansan of the Year will be Delano E. Lewis, former United States Ambassador to South Africa and past chief executive officer and president of National Public Radio. Bob Dixon, mayor of Greensburg, will accept the Distinguished Service Citation, on behalf of the residents of the city of Greensburg.

The event begins with a social hour at 5:30 p.m., followed by dinner and program at 6:30 p.m. Membership is not required to attend.

Corporate tables of 10 are available for $500, individual seating for lifetime members is available for $40 and new lifetime members may purchase seats for $50, which includes a membership fee. Tickets may be ordered by calling (785) 235-6245, online at ks nativesonsanddaughters.org or by mail to Native Sons and Daughters, Box 546, Topeka, Kan. 66601-0546.

Tickets will be mailed for all orders received by Friday, Jan. 23. Ticket orders received after that date may be picked up at the coat check area in the Capital Plaza Hotel, immediately adjacent to the Maner Conference Center, from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. on the day of the event or at the banquet door after 5 p.m.

Native Sons and Daughters was established to preserve Kansas’s history, uphold our pioneer ancestors, encourage youth to embrace Kansas ideals and honor outstanding citizens. Persons not born in Kansas are also invited to join the organization. Lifetime dues are $10 and may be submitted separately or with the banquet ticket order.
KU's Self admits to contacting top recruit

LAWRENCE (AP) - Kansas officials are checking to see if basketball coach Bill Self's brief encounter with a top recruit might constitute an NCAA infraction.

Self agrees he said hello to John Wall, a 6-foot-4 guard who had just played in a high school tournament in Springfield, Mo. It happened during an evaluation period last week when college coaches are not allowed contact with prospects other than to exchange greetings.

"We are aware of the report, and the administration is looking into it," said Chris Theisen, a Kansas spokesman.

Wall is rated the No. 1 overall recruit in the class of 2009 by Rivals.com. The Springfield News-Leader said the exchange took place between Self and Wall outside Wall's locker room after a game Thursday night.

"Basically, it's accurate," Self said after beating Texas A&M 73-53 Monday night. "I don't know if the exact quote is accurate. After the game was over, like I always do, like every coach always does, I had to catch a plane. So I went back to tell the coaches, 'Congratulations, good win.' I was approached and shook a hand and said, 'I can't talk to you, but you played really well.'"

Kansas is in the final year of a three-year NCAA probation for violations in football and men's basketball.

"If that exchange, which is all it was, is a problem, then our administration will deal with it," Self said. "I certainly by no means am I going to deny that basically that happened. But the reason I was back in the back was to say hi to the coaches after the game."

The question is whether the NCAA would consider Self and Wall's exchange as contact.
Maintenance backlog grows on campuses

BY JOHN HANNA
Associated Press Writer

TOPEKA, Kan. (AP) — A backlog of building maintenance projects on state university campuses is getting significantly worse, despite a program designed to address the problem, the state Board of Regents said Thursday.

The board, which oversees the higher education system, said the six state universities and the University of Kansas Medical Center in Kansas City have an $825 million backlog. That's 24 percent higher than the $663 million backlog reported at the end of 2006.

In 2007, the Legislature approved a plan for providing $134 million over five years to the universities for maintenance projects. It also provided tax credits to encourage donations for such projects.

But higher education officials said then that the program, as welcome as it was, wouldn't be enough to clear the backlog.

"It's no surprise that this problem continues to grow," said regents Chairwoman Donna Shank, of Liberal.

The board's report comes as Gov. Kathleen Sebelius is proposing to withhold $15 million in promised maintenance funds from the state's budget for fiscal 2010, which begins July 1. It's part of her plan to eliminate a projected $1 billion gap between anticipated revenues and current spending commitments.

"This is not an easy time for anyone," said Sebelius spokeswoman Nicole Corcoran. "The governor was forced to make some really tough decisions in this budget."

CARPENTER RENOVATION: A proposal from House Republicans to suspend the Statehouse renovation received a chilly reception Thursday from a key senator.

The project is in its ninth year and is expected to cost at least $285 million. Suspending the work is part of the House Republicans' legislative agenda for this year.

Speaker Mike O'Neal, of Hutchinson, said House Republicans are committed to finishing the project but want to wait to see whether construction and labor costs dip temporarily because of the recession.

But Senate Ways and Means Committee Chairman Jay Emler said it isn't a good idea because stopping and then restarting the work will create additional costs.

"You don't stop working on the house you live in when you're almost done with the remodeling," said the Lindsborg Republican.

"We need to see if there are areas where we can conserve. You need to look at what you're doing, but don't shut it down."

GOVERNOR'S SPOKESWOMAN: — A deputy labor secretary will become Gov. Kathleen Sebelius' new spokeswoman.

Sebelius announced Thursday that Beth Martino will become her communications director and press secretary, starting Jan. 26.

Martino will replace Nicole Corcoran, who's been spokeswoman since Sebelius took office in January 2003.

Corcoran is leaving to become chief of staff at the University of Kansas Athletics Department.

Martino has been a deputy secretary since 2007. Before that, she was the Department of Labor's director of marketing and communications.

"Beth's experience and knowledge will complement the team we have in place, and I'm confident she'll be a great addition," Sebelius said in a statement.

Martino's husband, Steve, is the executive director of the state Racing and Gaming Commission.

NEW JUSTICE: Dan Biles will take his seat on the Kansas Supreme Court on March 6.

The Shawnee attorney, named to the state's highest court by Gov. Kathleen Sebelius earlier this month, will be sworn in during a special 2 p.m. court session. His seat will be on the bench will be on the far right side, traditionally reserved for the newest member.

Biles is best known for his work for state agencies. He represented the State Board of Education in a 1999 lawsuit that forced the state to spend more money on public schools.

He also represented the Kansas Lottery before the Supreme Court, arguing that the 2007 expanded gambling law was constitutional. The court upheld the statute. 
State Could Become World Leader In Animal Research

By JOHN MILBURN
Associated Press Writer

MANHATTAN (AP) — Kansas officials said Tuesday that landing the National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility is another milestone in efforts to make the state a world leader in animal health research.

Construction of the $450 million lab at the Kansas State University campus is expected to require about 1,500 workers and could begin in 2010. The lab will employ between 300 and 500 scientists, conducting research currently done at an aging facility in Plum Island, N.Y.

Researchers at the lab will study animal diseases and other potential bioterrorism threats.

The Department of Homeland Security had not commented as of Tuesday on Monday’s announcement by members of the Kansas congressional delegation that the agency chose Manhattan for the project. However, a document obtained by The Associated Press shows that the agency making final confirmation of its decision, first announced in December, awarding the lab to Kansas.

For the city of Manhattan, the project adds to the challenges already presented by the Army’s growth since 2005 at nearby Fort Riley.

Manhattan Mayor Mark Hatesohl said leaders will be revising plans for housing, commercial development and city services.

"We're going to have to go back to the drawing board," Hatesohl said. "Compared to what to do with a shrinking tax base and population, these are pleasant challenges to deal with."

Ron Trewyn, vice president of research at Kansas State, said the seeds for landing the lab were sown in 1999, when the university established a program for homeland defense food safety, security and preparedness.

That led to construction of the Biosecurity Research Institute on the campus and greater collaboration with other researchers and animal health firms. The institute is going through final certifications to begin research, with a staff of 40. Research from Plum Island could be trans

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Animal Research
(Continued from Page 1)

ferred yet this year to Kansas, he said.

Manhattan is at the western edge
of the Kansas City Animal Health Corridor, which is home to more
than 120 animal health companies
with about 13,000 employees. The
corridor stretches to Columbia, Mo.,
and includes the University of Kan-
sas and University of Missouri as
well as Kansas State.

"This is where the activity is. We'll be
a magnet," Trewyn said. "This
should help keep kids in Kansas."

Trewyn predicted that NBAF re-
search would lead to cures and vac-
cines that would be produced in the
corridor, creating thousands of jobs
and potentially billions for the econ-
omy over the next several decades.

The project's cost could be closer
to $650 million. DHS has said ini-
tially the lab would cost $450 mil-
lion, plus $105 million in infrastruc-
ture improvements. However, spe-
cific designs for the Kansas State
location could increase the overall
(cost, the bulk paid in federal funds.

Manhattan has already experi-
enced an economic boom in the past
two years with the return of the 1st
Infantry Division at Fort Riley. The
Army post has seen more than $1
billion in construction with the arri-
val of thousands of soldiers and their
families.

Hatesohl said Manhattan has room
to accommodate the growth. A key
will be good communication among
local, state and federal agencies on
what to anticipate, much like ongo-
ing discussions with Fort Riley.

"I think we're in really good shape.
When we look back in 20 years, I
think people will think things went
pretty well," Hatesohl said.

Landing the laboratory wasn't
about giving the federal government
a patch of land, it was about finding
animal health solutions, said Tom
Thornton, president of the Kansas
Bioscience Authority.

"We're providing more than a big
box," Thornton said.

Legislators created the authority in
2004 to cultivate bioscience firms in
Kansas, with the goal of diversifying
the state economy by creating new,
high-tech jobs. Thornton compared
bioscience development to the avi-
ation industry that developed around
Wichita in the 1920s or computer
industry in California's Silicon
Valley in the 1980s.

The difference, he said, is that it
won't take decades to create jobs.
But that won't happen without a
push, he said.

"We must create that future. If we
allow it to grow organically, it will
take a long time," Thornton said. "If
we proactively focus on that future,
there will be a gravitational pull of
capital, resources to the region.

"We have a running start."

Bob Marcusse, president of the
Kansas City, Mo.-based Kansas City
Development Council, compared the
NBAF decision to the New York
Yankees signing slugger Alex Rod-
riguez, saying it was "a good team
that becomes a great team."

He said the animal health corridor
was already drawing attention from
firms as far away as Europe that are
interested in locating to the region
because of new lab.

"We have a powerful region al-
ready," Marcusse said. "Even though
Manhattan is a couple of hours
away, we would feel this is a tre-
 mendous success for the entire
community."
KU announces Fertig as a fall 2008 candidate for degree

LAWRENCE — The names of more than 1,600 candidates for degrees including Ellinwood’s Chris J. Fertig, have been announced by the Office of the Registrar for the fall 2008 semester at the University of Kansas.

Graduate and undergraduate degrees are conferred in December based on work completed during the fall semester. Because KU conducts only one formal commencement ceremony each year, many students graduating in the fall or summer terms will return for the traditional walk down the hill and into Memorial Stadium on Sunday, May 17, 2009.

Fertig will graduate with a Master of Arts/Geography degree.
Area students receive scholarships at KU

More than a half-dozen students from the Ellsworth County area are among more than 6,500 from the University of Kansas to receive scholarships. Recipients are:

- **Jacob Michael Olson**, son of Michael and Dawn Olson, senior in computer engineering, Paul and Virginia Bassett Miller, J.L. Constant and N.T. Veatch scholarships.
- **Kyle W. West**, son of Kristi and Randy West of Ellsworth, junior in marketing, N.T. Veatch and KU Memorial Corp. SUA Academic Support scholarships.
- **Holly Nicole Parry**, daughter of Dennis and Linda Parry of Moundridge, formerly of Ellsworth, junior in pharmacy, Nontraditional Undergraduate Student Scholarship.
- **Jantzen Winter Ward**, son of Cherilee Ward, junior in computer sciences, Max A. Miller Medical Scholarship.
- **Anna Marie Spears** of Wilson, daughter of Anita and Michael Spears, sophomore in pre-medicine, Cameron Kroh Reed Memorial Scholarship.
- **Amanda Marie Bachtel** of Brookville, daughter of James and Johanna Bachtel, junior in chemical engineering, El-Hodiri Scholarship.
LAWRENCE MAN DOCUMENTS RESIN BEE IN KANSAS

BY EILEEN RODDY
Lawrence Journal-World

LAWRENCE — Most people avoid bees like the plague. They certainly don’t welcome them at summer gatherings.

Ismael Hinojosa-Diaz, a University of Kansas entomology doctoral student, is different. While attending a barbecue at friend Charles Linkem’s house in June, he saw a bee nearly 1 inch long with a yellow thorax and black abdomen.

“I started screeching, ‘Help me! Help me!’ because I was so excited. I couldn’t believe my eyes,” he recalls.

This wasn’t your common variety bumble or carpenter bee. It was a giant resin (megachile sculpturalis), thought to have originally arrived in North America via Chinese and Japanese cargo ships.

“The first recorded collection of the bee occurred at the campus of North Carolina State University in 1994,” says Hinojosa-Diaz. “Since then, it’s appeared all over eastern North America.”

Until that summer day in Lawrence, the giant resin bee hadn’t been identified authoritatively west of the Mississippi River. Three years earlier, in 2005, Hinojosa-Diaz and four colleagues published a study predicting the bee would make its way as far as the Great Plains.

“To be the one to find the subject of our predictions and prove those predictions right was amazing,” he says.

After the bee’s capture, he lost no time in producing the first scholarly report of its recorded presence in Kansas. It was published in July.

As a boy growing up in Santa Maria Rayon, about two hours west of Mexico City, Hinojosa-Diaz had no idea he would one day end up catching bees in Kansas.

His mother died when he was 7 and, because his father had abandoned the family, he and his 17-year-old sister Yolanda went to live with their aunt.

“I wanted to be a scientist, but that was much too expensive,” he says. “So when it was time for college, I decided to study biology.”

He graduated with a bachelor’s degree in biology from the National University of Mexico in 1997 and then worked in the government’s treasury department, while attending night school to complete a master’s degree in animal biology.

“As part of my studies, I did an elective course on bees and really liked it,” he says. “From then on I became really involved in studying bees. Once you get into the bee world you soon learn that there’s a person named Charles Michener who has been the source of knowledge in this field for more than 60 years.”

He pauses and laughs.

“You also learn he’s been a professor in the University of Kansas for a long time, and has helped to create the most comprehensive and best bee collection in the world. It didn’t take me long to realize that there’s no better place in the world to do studies related to bee systematics and evolution than Kansas.”

After graduating with his master’s in 2001, he got a scholarship to attend the University of Kansas to study for a Ph.D. focused on bee systematics.

In spite of his coup with the giant resin bee, it’s not the subject for his doctorate. He’s focusing instead on the phylogenetic study of a genus of orchid bee. His work has already taken him to Spain, Costa Rica and Mexico.

“I’m an entomologist and systematist,” he explains. “I try to make sense of the organization of living things according to their evolutionary ties. In doing that I have to deal with many specimens and make reviews so it’s easy to find new species. I’ve described six. That’s not much.”
Ismael Hinojosa-Diaz, a Kansas University entomology doctoral student shows a bee at the university in Lawrence on Dec. 8, 2008. He found the first recorded sighting of the Giant Resin Bee in Kansas, a bee believed to have come to North America on a foreign cargo ship.

“It didn’t take me long to realize that there’s no better place in the world to do studies related to bee systematics and evolution than Kansas.”

— ISMAEL HINOJOSA-DIAZ
KU Doctoral student
Chelsie Harper receives degree

Chelsie Dawn Harper is one of the names listed for a degree for the fall 2008 semester at the University of Kansas. Chelsie is the daughter of Steve and Donna Harper of Hugoton. She received a Sport Science BSE Senior Bachelor of Science in Education.

Graduate and undergraduate degrees are conferred in December based on work completed during the fall semester. Because KU conducts only one formal commencement ceremony each year, many students graduating in the fall or summer terms will return for the traditional walk down the hill and into Memorial Stadium Sunday, May 17, 2009.

Five of KU's 13 colleges and schools conducted recognition programs or hooding ceremonies last month to honor those planning to graduate at the end of the semester: the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the School of Business, the School of Engineering, the School of Law and the William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications.

This article was submitted by Jean Eblen of the University of Kansas.