KU waives late payment charge for students in flooded counties

LAWRENCE — To assist students from 10 Kansas counties hit by natural disasters this spring and summer, the University of Kansas announced today it will offer those students the option to defer tuition and fee payments normally due in August.

Under the offer, the university will waive late payment penalties and work out individual deferred payment plans, said Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor Richard Lariviere.

KU students will begin receiving bills for fall semester tuition and fees late next week, with the first payment due Aug. 15. Ordinarily, an initial $100 penalty is assessed after that deadline and additional penalties are applied each month the bill is overdue. To qualify for the waiver and payment extension, affected students can complete an online form at www.bursar.ku.edu/forms/disaster_deferment.aspx. For more information, students may contact the University Bursar’s office at (785) 864-3322 or e-mail bursar@ku.edu by Aug. 15. Affected students who need additional assistance with emergency or unanticipated financial issues may also contact the Office of Student Financial Aid at (785) 864-4700. The policy presently applies to residents in Elk, Miami, Montgomery, Neosho and Wilson counties and residents in Edwards, Kiowa, Osage, Pratt and Stafford counties who were declared eligible for individual federal assistance.
Herring elected to nursing honor society

Judee Herring has been elected to membership in the Sigma Theta Tau international nursing honor society at the University of Kansas School of Nursing in Kansas City.

Herring, a graduate of Jefferson County North High School, received a bachelor’s degree in nursing from KU in May. Membership to the honor society is by invitation to students who demonstrate excellence in scholarship and to nurse leaders who demonstrate exceptional achievement in nursing.
KU ups downloading penalty

"LAWRENCE — In an attempt to deter students from illegally downloading music or movies in University of Kansas' student housing, the school has instituted a zero-tolerance policy.

Beginning this fall, university officials said they will deactivate ResNet Network access for students in residence halls if they are notified of a copyright violation and an appeal is denied. Students could still access computers on campus labs and use their university e-mail addresses.

The previous policy used a three strike system, but with an increasing number of complaints from organizations and pressure from the Recording Industry Association of America, officials decided to make the change.

The association recently announced it had sent 408 pre-litigation settlement letters to 23 universities, including the University of Kansas. Association spokeswoman Cara Duckworth said illegal downloading is disproportionately high on college campuses."
Wescoe study finds nothing

LAWRENCE — The number of brain tumors reported by employees at Wescoe Hall on the University of Kansas campus is a coincidence that was not caused by the hall's inadequate air-handling system, a study concluded.

Employees said at least five people who work in the building have been diagnosed with brain tumors in the past eight years.

Dr. John Neuberger, epidemiologist at the university's School of Medicine, led a team of researchers who spent a year trying to determine if the 34-year-old building posed health risks. A 21-page report on their efforts was released Friday when Neuberger and other research team members met with about a dozen current and former staff members from Wescoe.

The study recommended that the building's air-handling systems be replaced. Air tests in 2006 detected low levels of formaldehyde, but Wescoe was found to be environmentally safe.
From left, state Rep. Richard Proehl, University of Kansas Provost Richard Lariviere, Montie Taylor, president of TeamBank, Jerry Rea, superintendent at Parsons State Hospital and Training Center and David Lindeman, director of the KU Life Span Institute on the grounds of PSHTC, toured the institute Thursday during Lariviere's visit to Parsons.
Migrant workers focus of grant

LAWRENCE (AP) — A group of universities and community colleges has been collaborating in an effort to obtain federal funding for a program to help college-bound children of migrant workers.

Kansas State University will lead the effort, which will also include the University of Kansas, Emporia State University, Garden City Community College, and Kansas City, Kan., Community College.

The $2.1 million grant request Kansas State submitted would be for five years, reach 148 students and provide tuition for 12 credit hours per semester and a living stipend.

The collaboration began after the U.S. Department of Education denied the University of Kansas’ grant request to continue its College Assistance Migrant Program. The CAMP program had paid tuition for six credit hours and $750 in living expenses per semester for up to 24 students a year.

When the grant renewal was denied, a group of college officials started discussing how to collaborate and provide services throughout the state, Kansas State’s Bob Fanning said. Fanning is director of a program that helps children of migrant workers finish high school and assistant director of Kansas State’s English as Second Language program.

Under the proposal submitted in the spring to the Education Department, Kansas State would house CAMP and contract the service out to other schools with eligible students.

Fanning said at the same time the department denied Kansas’ grant, the Education Department renewed a five-year grant for a Kansas State program that targets high school students.

Lynn Bretz, the University of Kansas’ director of university communications, said the university wanted to have a strategic plan to continue its program for migrant workers’ children, especially as federal funding declines.

Fanning said if the grant was approved, the program would give students more choices.

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“We had a number of migrant students that just completed high school and had jobs in the local community. They couldn’t leave because they needed the employment,” Fanning said. “Now they can attend university while continuing to work.”

He expects to hear in the next few weeks whether the Kansas proposal was approved.

Fanning said he has heard the Education Department has received far more requests from schools to renew CAMP grants than it will be able to fund. He said he hopes the state’s reworked grant application will be helped by the fact that Kansas ranks seventh in the nation for the number of migrant and seasonal farm workers.
KU brain tumors just coincidence

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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The study recommended that the building's air-handling systems be replaced. Air tests in 2006 detected low levels of formaldehyde, but Wescoe was found to be environmentally safe. A $3 million project to replace the air system on Wescoe's first three floors has begun and will continue into 2009.

The inadequate airflow system didn't cause brain tumors, Neuberger said, but it could cause respiratory problems and eye irritation.

Betty Banks, a retired associate professor of classics, said she and other former staff members didn't have much hope that the system would be fixed because previous attempts have failed.

Steve Scannell, an architect in school's design and construction management, said the building's intake air duct was half the size it should be.
Group wants to block Geary County rice farm

Activists believe drug crops could contaminate food supply

By Sarah Green
KHI NEWS SERVICE

A national environmental group has asked the Kansas Department of Agriculture to block a water permit requested by a California-based company to grow genetically engineered rice for pharmaceuticals near Junction City.

The Center for Food Safety, a nonprofit public interest and environmental advocacy organization, asked the department to deny water-use permits to Ventria Biosciences because of concerns the rice crop could contaminate food supplies. The organization was established by the International Center for Technology Assessment to "challenge harmful food production technologies and promote sustainable alternatives," according to the letter.

"Growing drugs in foods undermines confidence in the integrity of the U.S. food supply, and in the 'coordinated framework' for regulation of agricultural biotechnology products," the letter said.

Ventria has applied for a "term" water-use permit, which if issued would be valid until the end of 2007, said Lisa Taylor, spokeswoman for the Kansas Department of Agriculture.

The agency's Division of Water Resources will look at the potential water use of the crop — not necessarily the crop itself — to determine whether to issue the permit to the company, Taylor said.

"The question is, how much water does the crop need to grow in Kansas?" she said. "We don't have a history for growing much rice in Kansas, so we don't have that information. This is a proving ground for the crop in Kansas in terms of learning how much water it will take to grow it."

Ventria already has water rights, Taylor said, but seeks the term permit because the rice crop could require more water. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the rice already has been planted.

In May, the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service approved Ventria's application to grow the genetically engineered rice in Geary County. Under the permit, the company also must have an emergency management plan, specific testing procedures for the rice lines and have their records audited by the federal Biotechnology Regulatory Services.

"APHIS has determined that the proposed action will not have a significant impact, either individually or cumulatively, on the quality of the human environment and that no Environmental Impact Statement will be prepared regarding this decision," according to the permit approval document.

According to the document, 29 people wrote to support the venture.

About 1,000 individuals and rice industry representatives wrote to ask that the company's application be denied. The government also received 18,910 "nearly identical form letters" collected by two public interest groups from individuals generally opposed to growing food crops producing pharmaceutical or industrial compounds.

Those in favor of the proposed rice farm included two farm industry organizations, nine physicians or other scientific professionals, Kansas Secretary of Agriculture Adrian Polansky, the mayor of Junction City, and representatives from Kansas State University and the University of Kansas School of Medicine.

Ventria, which is based in Sacramento, Calif., didn't respond to KHI News Services' requests for comment.

Scott Deeter, the company's president and chief executive officer, earned a bachelor's degree in economics from KU and has worked for Cargill and Koch Industries, according to his biography on the company's Web site, www.ventria.com.

The rice the company proposes to grow in Geary County would contain two proteins, lactoferrin and lysozyme, which are found in human breast milk and "epithelial surface secretions," such as tears and saliva, according to the company's Web site, www.ventria.com.

"Proteins extracted from the rice will be incorporated into oral rehydration solutions to address childhood diarrhea," according to the site. "Ventria is also developing other products using these proteins. The rice itself is then discarded."

Kansas food producers are concerned about the crop being introduced here, said Dan Nengengast, executive director of the Kansas Rural Center.

"It's sometimes perceived from Kansans as 'here's something that's going to help — so why are people against it?'" he said. "From a larger perspective, there are a lot of people against it. There's a distrust of the agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's ability to ensure that drug-bearing rice doesn't get out in the food stream, which has happened in multiple occasions where there has been contamination."

Traditional food crops are starting to be used as vehicles to produce other substances, such as pharmaceuticals, because scientists understand the genomics of those crops, Nengengast said.

"Does it make sense to put something nonedible into a food crop?" he said. "If they can use this in any plant, why don't they use something they can control in a lab?"

The Center for Food Safety says the lactoferrin found in the genetically engineered rice is harmful to humans.

"The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has not approved the pharmaceuticals Ventria is growing for human consumption," according to the letter.

Sarah Green is a staff writer for KHI News Service, which specializes in coverage of health issues facing Kansans. She can be reached at sg@khi.org or at 785-233-5443, ext. 118.
LAWRENCE — Edith Taylor, professor of ecology and evolutionary biology and senior curator of paleobotany at The University of Kansas, has received the Merit Award, the highest honor bestowed by the Botanical Society of America.

Taylor's work takes her on six-week treks through Antarctica, where she hunts fossil plants that thrived on the continent from 240 million to 260 million years ago.

According to Taylor, at that time a warmer Antarctica was covered with forests and lush greenery, and dinosaur-like creatures roaming the terrain.

The Merit Award was given to Taylor in recognition of her "outstanding contributions to the science of botany."
KU welcomes new Pott County students

New University of Kansas students and their parents from Clay, Dickinson, Geary, Marshall, Pottawatomie, Riley and Washington Counties will be welcomed into the KU family at the Jayhawk Generations Welcome Picnic Thursday, July 26, at Manhattan.

The KU Alumni Association and its Flint Hills Chapter will greet the next generation of Jayhawks at Advanced Dental Arts, 4201 Anderson Ave. Area alumni, new students, students interested in learning more about KU, and parents are welcome to attend. Each new Jayhawk will also receive a free T-shirt.

For more information, visit www.kualumni.org, call the KU Alumni Association at (800) 584-2957, or kualumni@kualumni.org.

The alumni association invited incoming students whose enrollment deposits were received by the Office of Admissions and Scholarships by May 1.

Pott County students invited to the function were Alison McCourt, Onaga; Claire Mundell, St. George; Kenzie Cordt, St. Marys; Megan Brooks, Jill Havens, Jordan Jacobson, Lacey Kennedy, Reed Peterson and Paul Tackett; Wamego; and Jennifer Robb, Westmoreland.