Guest Editorials

Game great, should have been played in Lawrence

... Was it worth the million or more dollars the Kansas University Athletic Department raked in for playing the Kansas-Missouri game in Kansas City's Arrowhead Stadium, taking the game away from Lawrence and KU's Memorial Stadium?

Obviously, the answer depends on whom you ask. KU Chancellor Robert Hemenway and Athletic Director Lew Perkins placed dollars and a desire to make friends in Kansas City ahead of other considerations. They would answer the above with a resounding "yes!"

This was a very special season for the Jayhawks, and they compiled a great record....

Hemenway and Perkins gave away the home field advantage KU would have enjoyed. ...

If coach Mark Mangino and his players were asked "was it worth it?" they probably would say publicly that it was OK to play at Arrowhead.

But if they could give their honest answer, chances are they would have given most anything to play the game in Memorial Stadium, filled to capacity with screaming KU fans....

Maybe the home-field advantage would not have made any difference, but we'll never know.

Ask Lawrence business people "was it worth it?" and there would be an angry and emphatic "no."

Ask many others about taking a college game off campus and moving it to a professional field, and again the majority would probably say "no." ...

But the true and biggest winner is Kansas City and the Kansas City Chiefs organization — not Lawrence or Columbia. ... Granted, neither Hemenway nor Perkins had any idea the game would have such significance when they agreed to the deal.

Regardless, the pact never should have been signed. ...

College games should remain on college campuses.

It is highly unlikely next year's KU-MU game will garner as much attention as this year's battle, but Kansas City and Chiefs officials will do everything they can to hype it to the maximum....

Congratulations to KU's players and coaches. Thanks for a great season, and best wishes for a postseason bowl game victory. — The Lawrence Journal-World
Containing health care costs requires reform

By Ray Davis
Special to Reflector-Chronicle

Editor’s note: The following is a column by Ray Davis, PhD, Professor in the Department of Public Administration at the University of Kansas and Board member of the Kansas Health Policy Authority, regarding how the health reform recommendations delivered to the Kansas Legislature will help contain rising health care costs.

While health care costs continue to rise in the United States and in Kansas, employee wages have not kept up with the rising costs. A recent report by the Congressional Budget Office found that if the recent trends in rising health care costs continue, in 75 years, health care expenditures will consume 49% of the United State's gross domestic product. Health care will eat up larger portions of our paychecks and our government budgets.

Is there anything that Kansas can do to contain this growth in health care spending? Yes there is -- the Kansas Health Policy Authority (KHPA) recently delivered health reform recommendations to the Kansas legislature, many of which are aimed at containing health care costs. Here's how --

Built into several of the recommendations include increasing personal responsibility, which encourages cost sharing and improving health behaviors. In addition, increased access to health information technology that reduces fraud and enhances efficiency of health care services and gives consumers the power to compare prices and quality of services highlight a few market-driven methods for controlling costs.

Improving coordination of care, increasing access to medical homes, and implementing disease management in high-risk populations can reduce the need for emergency services and decrease overuse and unnecessary use of health care services. Prevention that focuses on healthier living across all populations can reduce future health care costs. Maximizing federal match funding and providing affordable health insurance to populations currently uninsured – small business and low-income childless adults – will not only improve their access to care, but may also reduce cost shifting to those with insurance and reduce inappropriate use of emergency rooms.

Health reform in Kansas has multiple stakeholders with consumers being central to these initiatives. The 21 health reform recommendations presented by the KHPA have the potential as a package to increase efficiency of Kansas' health care system, decrease over- and inappropriate use of services, and reduce long-term health care costs. Maintaining the status quo will do nothing for reducing future health care expenditures and will leave even more Kansans unable to pay their health care bills or without access to health services.

The Health Policy Authority is a state agency created to develop and maintain a coordinated and data-driven health policy agenda, and it was tasked this year with reforming health care delivery in Kansas. On November 1, 2007, the Kansas Health Policy Authority Board reported to the Governor and Kansas Legislature health reform options aimed at improving the health and health care system in Kansas.
Planned tour postponed for immediate issues

BY JOEY BERLIN
berlin@emporiagazette.com

Flint Hills Technical College and Westar Energy used Rep. Jerry Moran’s visit to Emporia to enlist Moran as a powerful advocate for the need to find students willing to work in the energy industry.

Moran visited FHTC on Thursday afternoon after speaking at the Emporia Country Club, but his planned tour of the college never occurred. Moran, accompanied by state Rep. Peggy Mast, talked to school personnel in a conference room for a little over an hour, including college President Dean Hollenbeck and Dean of Students Lisa Kirmer. Also present were representatives of Westar Energy.

Hollenbeck and Westar’s Mark Schreiber talked to Moran about the college’s partnership with Westar, the retiring work force in the energy field and the need to find workers to replace retirees.

Moran mostly listened and asked questions, such as when he asked one of Westar’s representatives if he saw there being an increase in nuclear power plants being built in the near future. The representative said it couldn’t be ruled out.

Hollenbeck told Moran that the biggest problem with finding interest in vocational education is the perception that vocational schools were for people who couldn’t make it in traditional forms of education. “And those days were gone 25 years ago. That’s not the case anymore,” Hollenbeck said. “Of course, at a technical college, the bar is considerably raised. We have the same entrance exams as KU, KSU, Emporia State.”

Hollenbeck said FHTC’s partnerships with Westar and other energy companies were a way to change that perception.

After the meeting, Schreiber said he was satisfied that Moran had seen the importance of increasing interest in programs that prepare students for the energy and power plant industries.

“I think he understands it,” Schreiber said, “because there’s a large area he represents in the state — western Kansas, central Kansas — there’s a need out there for those students that are coming out of high school that might not consider a four-year college or university.”

With an engagement in Wichita later in the day, Moran was on a tight schedule and ran out of time before he could take the tour. But he said he would commit to returning to FHTC, where he was visiting for the first time in a few years.
Man becomes sales director

Don Coash, a former resident of Goodland, has been promoted to executive director of sales for Accuweather of Wichita.

Coash graduated from Goodland High School in 1984 and from the University of Kansas with a degree in meteorology. He started as a severe weather forecaster in 1995 and after several years became the director of operations in Wichita.

In 2002, he started selling and marketing severe weather warnings to commercial clients for WeatherData. He sold and managed over $3,500,000 in business over the next four years.

Coash joined the Kansas National Guard in 1991 which include his station operations for the Kansas Air National Guard in Forbes. He served in Kuwait in 2000 and graduated from Senior Leadership Academy in 2005. Coash retired with an honorable discharge in May 2007 with 20 years of active and guard duty.

He and his wife Michelle (Richardson) have three children, Aaron, Austin and Allison, and live in Valley Center. Michelle is also from Goodland and graduated in 1988.
Garden City lawmaker says coal plant emissions would aid crops

By SARAH KESSINGER
HARRIS NEWS SERVICE

TOPEKA — Garden City Rep. Larry Powell sent a letter to newspapers last week touting the benefits that carbon dioxide from coal-fired power plants would have on crops in western Kansas.

The Republican lawmaker wrote the letter in protest of state Health and Environment Secretary Rod Bremby’s recent rejection of a permit for a coal-fired power plant near Powell’s district.

Powell also questions the science behind the now-common reports the planet is warming because of an atmospheric overload of carbon dioxide, primarily from coal-burning power plants and automobiles.

“One of the really good things about CO2 is that plants perform better under stress (drought, etc.) with increased levels of CO2,” Powell wrote.

Johannes Feddema, a professor in the University of Kansas’ Department of Geography, said the letter overlooks the broader issue of global warming.

“The largest point to me is that picking and choosing what’s ‘good’ and what’s ‘bad’ misses the point that any great rate of change in our climate or atmospheric chemistry is going to be a challenge for our large human population that is entirely dependent on mass production of food and goods,” Feddema said.

Higher carbon dioxide levels might have some fertilizing effects on crops, he said, but that wouldn’t make much of a difference if drought, for example, were occurring.

The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which includes a wide array of researchers including some Kansas scientists, has created models of future climate amid global warming. The models show potential long-term drought in water-short parts of Kansas and other western states.

Powell said Thursday he dismisses the panel’s findings and doesn’t believe manmade climate change is occurring.

“A consensus of scientists is not scientific proof. If it’s actually true, they’d all agree with that.”

Powell said citations in his letter to newspapers this week came from a book written by brothers Keith and Craig Isdo.

According to the Union of Concerned Scientists in Washington, the Isdo brothers have done work in the past for Western Fuels Association.

The association, which actively promotes skepticism of global warming research, is a cooperative of coal-fired utilities that includes Hays-based Sunflower Electric Corp., which seeks to build the two plants in Finney County.

Sunflower’s Chief Executive Officer Earl Watkins is a Western Fuels board member.

“I got the book in the mail and I went through it, and it had things I’d not heard before,” Powell said.

The book, “Forecasting World Food Supplies: The Impact of Rising Atmospheric CO2 Concentrations,” concludes carbon dioxide should boost agricultural production by 50 percent during the next 50 years, he said.

In his letter, Powell said he’d been looking to learn just what effects more carbon dioxide would have on crops.

Joy Ward, an assistant professor of plant ecology at the University of Kansas, said it’s admirable Powell seeks answers on the topic.

Through her research of carbon dioxide and crops, she and other scientists find global warming is causing significant change, some quite detrimental to agriculture.

By fumigating field sites with higher levels of carbon dioxide, they’ve learned that when conditions are good, crop production improves. But carbon dioxide also is causing temperatures to rise, which is a problem for plant life.

“In the background is a very negative problem,” Ward said. “You have to separate the direct effects, which are positive, from the indirect effects.”

It’s causing weather extremes, she noted, more rainfall in some places and less in others, more severe hurricanes, tornadoes and droughts.

Plus, higher carbon dioxide levels might benefit some crops under good conditions, but not others, she said. So its positive effects aren’t universal.

Ward said she and colleagues who research carbon are obligated to fully inform Kansas policy makers.
Lawmaker says coal plant emissions will aid crops

**BY SARAH KESSINGER**
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See CO2 / A3

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Continued from Page A1

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Ward said she and colleagues who research carbon are obligated to fully inform Kansas policy makers.

“This is a massive area of research,” she said. “In the bigger picture, the increasing CO2 is causing plant changes that are not good in many ecosystems.”
Grant aims to reduce looming teacher shortage

LAWRENCE (AP) -- University of Kansas officials hope that a new $2.4 million federal grant will help them reduce the shortage of math and science teachers in Kansas.

The program is called UKan Teach. It gives students majoring in math or one of four areas of science the opportunity to earn a secondary school teacher certification without going through the School of Education.

Officials estimate that Kansas public schools will be short some 400 math and science teachers.

The Kansas program is patterned after a similar program at the University of Texas, which has produced about 70 math and science teachers each year.
Military, academia building bridges

Soldiers look to colleges to help them learn how to think, not what to think

By JOHN MILBURN
The Associated Press

LAWRENCE — When the United States faced the daunting challenge of World War II, the nation’s academics answered the call to assist the military in winning the fight.

Vietnam ended much of that goodwill, with students and faculty alike outspoken about the war and the United States’ motives. The University of Kansas wasn’t immune, with the student union going up in flames in April 1970 amid protests.

Nearly 40 years later, the United States is again in an unpopular war, but the military and academics have mended their fences. Cooperation is coming back. In what one top general calls “graduate-level warfare,” soldiers are looking to college campuses for help.

“What we’ve entered into is a new kind of conflict where I think academics and military people agree we have to learn more about our enemies than we did,”

Jonathan Earle
interim director of the Dole Institute of Politics

See ACADEMIA, Page A2
FROM PAGE A1

to learn more about our ene-
mies than we did,” said Jona-
than Earle, interim director of
the Dole Institute of Politics
at the University of Kansas.
“That takes it out of the old
political rubric from the Viet-
nam era, where it’s ideology,
left wing, right wing.”
Throughout this year, pro-
fessors at the University of
Kansas have been collaborat-
ing with officers at Fort Leav-
enworth’s Combined Arms
Center.
They are sharing their
experiences from deployments
to Afghanistan and Iraq, dis-
cussing the culture of those
nations and how to avoid mak-
ing mistakes on the battlefield
that could undermine goals,
let alone cost lives.
Recently, the officers and
professors presented papers
during a symposium at the

William Caldwell IV held
court with about 150 students
in the student union.
Julia Groeblacher, a sopho-
more in political science, eco-
nomics from McPherson, was
able to ask Caldwell pointed
questions about foreign policy
and the military.
“This is one of the most
enlightening experiences that
we can have as students,” she
said.

Earle went to Columbia
University in New York,
where he never saw anyone
in uniform except when Nica-
ragua’s Daniel Ortega came
to speak. As a professor, he
regularly has Army officers
in his classroom working on
advanced degrees, giving him
and students exposure to the
military’s future leaders who
have been to war.
“I find it very fruitful and
very useful,” he said.
Powell says coal plant emissions help crops

Lawmaker uses letter to point out benefits of carbon dioxide

By SARAH KESSINGER
Harris News Service

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Teacher retention summit airs growing concerns

Sarah Kessinger
Harris News Service

TOPEKA -- Many Kansas school districts must spend a growing share of their budgets sending recruiters outside the state and sometimes even outside the country to find new teachers, a panel of educators noted Friday.

Annual vacancies -- in math, science, special education as well as other areas -- call for a greater focus from leaders and better teacher pay, they said at a summit on the state’s expanding teacher shortage.

“They’re leaving for money, folks,” said Mike Lane, Emporia State University president. “That’s the single biggest reason.”

About 300 Kansas school administrators and state education officials met for the Teacher Recruitment and Retention Summit to assess what some are terming a crisis. Lane suggested more recruiting begin in public schools. Students often judge by their classroom experiences whether they’d like to go into teaching as a profession.

“If we’re not doing the job there, there’s very little my faculty can do to recruit them into the field later,” he said.

University of Kansas Dean of Education Rick Ginsberg said the state’s schools lose most teachers in early career years and late in careers.

Payment is part of the issue, he said, as young people enter the profession but are lured away by higher-paying jobs. Working conditions, too, play a major role in retention.

As for long-term teachers, they can retire at a relatively young age, he said, and they often will once they’ve hit the maximum level on the salary schedule.

The state faces a major challenge in five years when 36 percent of its teacher workforce is due to reach retirement age.

He suggested mounting a comprehensive, well-researched approach to recruitment, retention, teacher certification issues and teacher preparation.

Solutions, he and others said, need to result in better pay, including consideration of pay based on performance quality; recruitment targeted at states with an oversupply of teachers - such as Michigan and Indiana; strengthening of programs that encourage high schools to channel students into local community colleges or other universities; and establishment of a statewide recruitment center.

Ginsberg cited a survey done at KU a few years ago in which some high-achieving students were asked why they didn’t plan to pursue a teaching degree.

Their reply: “Because we see what our teachers have to do.”

Susan Scherling, superintendent in Stanton County schools, said her far-southwest Kansas district struggles to recruit to such a remote area. But she thinks the $33,000 starting salary is competitive for the small district of 467 students.

While the district offers teachers small class sizes, the response she often hears from recruits is “you are so far from everything” or “you are so far from anything.”

Ed Raymond, assistant superintendent of human resources for Wichita public schools, said that in the past, his staff typically had to fill 200 teaching positions each year.

Now it’s 450 vacancies.

The district creates promotional videos, offers signing bonuses among other lures. The district has staff dedicated solely to recruiting year-round, he said. What Raymond hears from them after they attend teacher hiring fairs is that they see more recruiters than they do prospective teachers and graduates.

“We’ve made headway, but we know the future looks even darker.