Deal would keep college costs stable

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TOPEKA – An effort to make college costs more predictable sounds intriguing to recent Ottawa High School graduate Sara Humm.

Set to begin her freshman year at the University of Kansas in August, Humm’s class could be the first at the school to receive what’s being called a “four-year tuition compact.”

Last month, KU officials announced a plan to hike tuition charges by about 16 percent for all incoming freshmen. But they would also freeze those charges at the same rate for four years.

The state Board of Regents is scheduled to vote on the proposal Thursday as it sets tuition and course fee rates for 2007-08 at all state universities.

Proposed hikes for Kansas residents were released last month and ranged from a 5.1 percent jump in tuition and fees at Fort Hays State to 9.5 percent at Emporia State.

The guaranteed tuition rate proposal has received positive reviews so far, KU spokeswoman Lynn Bretz said. At several recent orientations, parents reportedly burst into applause when told there might be no tuition increases for four years, she said.

“We’re taking that as pretty good feedback,” Bretz said.

Initially pushed by students leaders, under the tuition compact, resident incoming freshmen would pay a single tuition rate of $213 per credit hour for four years. Out-of-state students would pay $560 per credit hour.

The compact rate is the average of what students would pay over four years if the university increased tuition 5 percent annually.

However, Humm, 18, said she doesn’t know how much the new plan would benefit her as she tries to figure out how to pay off her college bills.

If college costs rise faster than expected, the guaranteed rate could be a good deal. But the bargain might not be so good for students who transfer from KU prior to graduating or if yearly rates don’t rise as steeply as the guarantees.

To pay for her schooling, Humm said she planned to depend heavily on student loans to finance her education.

She said she also planned to work, hopefully keeping her job at an Ottawa Applebee’s, and receive some assistance from her mother, Barbara.

While the prospect of borrowing a significant amount to cover her education is a bit daunting, Humm said she hoped it would all pay off in the long run.

Colleges everywhere appear to be expensive, she said.

“Definitely considered how I am going to pay for this,” Humm said. “In going to KU, I know I’m going to a good school. Hopefully I’ll have a good job after I graduate to pay for the student loans and the other bills.”

Barbara Humm said she thinks that KU’s four-year guaranteed tuition plan could help out in paying for her daughter’s college education.

But even so, the substantial amount of money needed to pay for a college education remains a reality that she and her daughter will have to deal with.

“I think it’s just one of those things where you do what you’ve got to do,” Barbara Humm said.

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### Tuition

**Continued from Page A1**

KU officials have also set out a four-year schedule for fees and plan to allow students to fix their on-campus housing costs for two years as a way of curbing year-to-year cost fluctuations.

“Those are the programs about making predictability back into college expenses,” Bretz said. “That’s what is so hard for families. Not knowing what college costs are going to be over four years.”

**Doing what it takes**

In recent years, the most reliable thing about universities’ four-year tuition charges has been that they would go up significantly.

Tuition and fees for in-state residents attending KU and Kansas State University have more than doubled since 2002. Other state universities have seen annual increases averaging 8 percent to 12 percent.

However, state officials said Kansas rates remain a deal compared to what students in surrounding states pay to attend similar institutions, averaging a discount of 15 to 23 percent in one comparison.

“Tuition rates have rapidly increased across the nation, but rates at our state’s universities continue to provide Kansans with an exceptional educational value,” state Board of Regents Chairman Nelson Galle said in a written statement.

But for students such as Humm, the increases mean taking on an increasing debt burden in order to obtain a college degree.

At public universities, student-loan debt levels for 2004 graduating seniors nationally reached $17,250, a 63 percent increase from 1993 levels, when adjusted for inflation.

Fifty-three percent of the undergraduate students expecting to graduate from KU in the spring of 2006 relied on loans. The borrowers carried an average load of $19,268, according to university financial aid data.
KU alumni welcome new students to Great Bend picnic

New University of Kansas students and their parents from Barton, Edwards, Pawnee, Rush and Stafford counties will be welcomed into the KU family at Jayhawk Generations Welcome Picnic at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, June 19, in Great Bend.

The KU Alumni Association and its West Central chapter will greet the next generation of Jayhawks at Veterans Memorial Park West Shelter, 17th Terrace and McKinley.

Area alumni, new students, students interested in learning more about KU and parents are invited to attend and enjoy complimentary food and beverages. Each new Jayhawk will also receive a free t-shirt.

Alumni association representatives and guests planning to attend are: Sarah Blaney, Kansas Honors Program coordinator; Mike Davis, senior vice president of alumni programs; Heath Peterson, director of Kansas programs; and Jamie Winkelman, alumni programs coordinator.

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

The alumni association invited incoming students whose enrollment deposits were received by the Office of Admissions and Scholarships by May 1. The guests are listed at www.news.ku.edu/2007/june/8/greatbendpicnic.shtml.

Kristi Jensen and Jacquelyn Koester of Hoisington High are among those invited.
KANSAS CITY, Kan. (AP) — The University of Kansas Medical Center plans to invest $800 million over the next 10 years in a bid to attract more life science research to the region.

The Kansas City Star reported Sunday that the plan, to be unveiled Tuesday, will include hiring 244 researchers and adding almost 863,000 square feet to the center’s Kansas City, Kan., campus, as well as some space at the university’s main campus in Lawrence.

The center wants to more than quadruple its research grants from $88 million last year to $340 million by the end of 2016.

More importantly, university officials say the initiative will create the major academic entity around which an elite regional life science center can grow. The central institutions are viewed as vital for training workers and generating the early stage commercial products, ideas and startup businesses that fuel the rest of the region.

“We know what it will take to move KU’s research enterprise to the next level,” said Robert Hemenway, the university’s chancellor. “The benefits will be profound. Advances in research will improve lives and a vigorous research effort absolutely can be an economic driver for the region.”

The plan also would create new research and care centers with the help of Kansas City, Mo.-area partners, such as Saint Luke’s Hospital, Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics and the Stowers Institute for Medical Research.

University officials haven’t said how they’ll pay for the initiative other than through tax dollars and $100 million in funding from the Kansas Bioscience Authority and philanthropists.

They say their partners already have pledged seed money, and the region has shown support for civic enhancements such as arenas and entertainment districts.

Experts say Kansas City would benefit from such a drive for a central research hub.

“Pre-requisite to building your efforts in the biosciences is having a strong enough research base,” said Walt Plosila, vice president at Battelle Memorial Institute in Ohio and an expert on the development of regional technology centers. “Kansas City historically hasn’t had a strong research base.”

The region has research institutions, such as the medical center, the University of Missouri-Kansas City and Stowers. But those institutions aren’t large enough to provide a foundation for a regional research economy, like that provided by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology or University of Wisconsin.

Benno Schmidt, a former president of Yale University and head of a Kansas City Community Foundation task force, identified the lack of a premier research center as the region’s biggest need. He encouraged the community to harness the medical center’s growth with further expansion.

Schmidt said the medical center already has begun recruiting new researchers and is increasing its funding to attract federal grants, seeking to improve its standing.

“It would move it into the top 50 medical centers around the country, which is what we thought the goal ought to be for the region,” he said.

The proposal would create a new center dedicated to transforming promising research into immediate treatment options, teaming up with expertise developed at hospitals and research centers on both sides of the state line.

“It is a way of taking advantage of the strong clinical strength of the hospitals, who can be very, very effective partners on the translational research front,” Schmidt said.

For example, Children’s Mercy is using $8.2 million of its own outside funding to unlock advances in how genetic differences help patients respond to certain drugs. The hospital said its researchers also could add to understanding in cancer and diabetes.

“Our greatest asset in terms of taking a discovery and turning it into an application is the huge pool of patients we serve,” said Greg Kearns, the hospital’s director of medical research.

Officials at Saint Luke’s Health System said they also support the medical center’s expansion and said they would be able to contribute their expertise in cardiovascular treatment.