Performing music energizes MHS grad

By CAROL DREILING
Sentinel Staff Writer

When Julia Snell joins the other 173 McPherson High School seniors at Saturday's commencement exercises in the Roundhouse, she will conclude her high school musical career with one last flute performance.

She and a classmate, Rebecca Martin, on the piano, will play an Irish folk song, "Ashokan Farewell."

Snell's senior year has been marked by some remarkable musical milestones, including her selection as first chair flute for the Kansas State Honor Band. That was a threepeat performance as she was first chair in both her sophomore and junior years.

She auditioned in the Young Artists Competition with the Salina Symphony in early spring and was one of two students chosen to play with the orchestra. The other student was a violinist from Salina, Snell said. During the introduction before her performance, the director highly praised her musical talent.

"I couldn't tell you what he said because he talked about me just before I came on stage to play and I was focused on that," Snell said.

As pleased as she is with her individual accomplishments, she also is quite proud of the achievement of the MHS concert band.

When she was a freshman, the band performed in a competition in Colorado Springs. That group of musicians earned a score of 74 on a 100 point scale. Over All Schools Day weekend, the band performed in the concert band competition in Dallas. This time, their score was 96.

Snell began playing flute in the sixth grade and candidly admits to choosing that instrument because Ashley Sweat, a 2006 MHS graduate, was playing one.

"I always wanted to be in band," she said. "I started playing piano in the first grade. Music is just natural for me."

Competition at all levels is intense, but Snell found that each year she tried out for the state band it became less intimidating.

Snell described the large warm-up room as "loud and chaotic" as students prepared for their turn. Auditions included playing one chromatic scale, two major scales, a lyrical piece and the prepared movements from Bach's Suite in B minor.

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Snell

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The musicians also were required to sight read, a very important part of the audition, according to Snell.

The auditions for the 2007 state band took place at Salina Central High School and the results were not revealed until they were posted on the Internet the following Tuesday evening.

Snell began taking lessons in the seventh grade from Janna Kellogg, who was a MHS band student at that time. The following year and continuing through the present, she takes weekly lessons from Shawna McCarthy.

Snell also plays for her church, in small groups and for the high school musicals. She is the principal flutist for the Salina Youth Symphony that performs during the summer.

"It (playing the flute) is fun, even though practice is sometimes tedious," Snell said. "You must make it new and refreshing each time. I love it; it doesn't get old."

In the fall, Snell will attend the University of Kansas, where she plans to major in flute performance. She has been awarded a music performance scholarship and a freshman honors scholarship.

KU is one of the top universities in the United States for music therapy, a field Snell may consider after she has earned her undergraduate degree.

Snell gives credit for her success to the many "musical mentors" she has had, including Kyle Hopkins, MHS band director, and McCarthy. She also described her years of study of piano with Alice Parks.

"Without the support of so many people, I couldn't have accomplished everything I did," Snell said.

She also praised the support she has at home, particularly from her parents.

"We have this joke that they wish they had started me at five and we had moved to Boston," Snell said, describing the hours her parents have spent listening to mock auditions.

Snell knows that a degree in flute performance will probably take her out of Kansas.

"I just don't know where I'll be," she said, "but I'm going to see where life takes me."
C Eagle Insider captures All Kansas Award

LAWRENCE -- The newspaper staff of The Eagle Insider from Canton-Galva High School won the All Kansas Award for newspaper journalism for a first-year paper.

The award was presented to journalism students from Canton-Galva in the Class 2A-1A division of the Kansas Scholastic Press Association write-off contest at the University of Kansas.

Several CGHS students won awards for their work.

Ben Coffey, senior and editor, first in advertising. Coffey won first as a sophomore and second as a junior.

Ashley Vogts, junior, first in sports photography. Caitlin Nelson, junior, second in newspaper sports writing.

Cassandra Smith, senior, honorable mention in infographics and in editing.

Shannon Williams, junior and assistant editor, honorable mention in newspaper design.

"That was very exciting," Jessica Bowman, adviser, said. "As individuals, all the students placed as well. Needless to say, they were all extremely happy with the results. What a great weekend for us."
The McPherson High School Class of 2007 was honored recently during the Seniors Honor Night event in the main theater.

The following awards and acknowledgements were made:

**Class Valedictorians:** Lesli Gilbert, Rebecca Martin, Sarah Nealeigh, Amy Sents

**Class Salutatorians:** Lindsay Fibranz, Julia Snell, Ashley Walker

**Kansas Board of Regents Certificate of Recognition:** Jessie Barnmer, Stephanie Bunch, Grace Chin, Andrew Claassen, Christopher Cox, Brady Crist, Aaron Flickinger, Lesli Gilbert, Tucker Hawkins, Adam Loecker, Steele Pavlovsky, Heather Peterson, Abigail Ratlief, Richard Reed, Amy Sents, Janelle Smith, Douglas Sommers

**Kansas Board of Regents Exceptional Academic Performance:** Rebecca Martin, Sarah Nealeigh, Amy Sents

**Robert C. Byrd Scholarship:** Amy Sents

**National Merit Commended Students:** Antonia Jantz, Rebecca Martin

**National Achievement Scholarship:** Sasha Harden

**National Achievement Commended Scholarship:** Rane Baldwin

**Presidential Award for Educational Excellence:** Caprice Applequist, Rane Baldwin, Caid Buchman, Stephanie Bunch, Grace Chin, Rebecca Dick, Lindsay Fibranz, Bridget Fowler, Lesli Gilbert, Wade Graham, Lisa Hall, Sasha Harden, Tucker Hawkins, Antonia Jantz, Amanda Keim, Robb Krehbiel, Stephanie LeBlanc, Rebecca Martin, Jaquelynn Moore, Sarah Nealeigh, Sara Norman, Kristen Payne, Heather Peterson, Abigail Ratlief, Richard Reed, Kelly Roane, Amy Sents, Kirstyn Smith, Julia Snell, Douglas Sommers, Ashley Walker

**Governor's Scholars Award:** Rebecca Martin, Amy Sents

**Auxiliary & Past President's Parley of the American Legion Scholarship:** Alex Whitehill

**American Legion Citizenship Award:** Kyle Burnett, Rebecca Martin

**Noon Kiwanis Club of McPherson Medical Scholarship:** Rebecca Martin, Alex Whitehill

**Kiwanis Scholarship:** Ashley Walker

**McPherson Lions Club Achievement Awards:** Clayton Abell (Drafting), Martha Krier (Carpentry), Brooke Lacy (Business), Vincent Mannebach (Technology), Abigail Ratlief (Accounting), Amy Sents (Agriculture), Julia Snell (Journalism), Rachelle Sowards (FACS)

**Tri-Chapter P.E.O. Scholarship:** Lisa Hall, Amy Sents

**AY P.E.O Scholarship:**

Kelly Roane

National Achievement Scholarship: Sasha Harden
National Achievement Commended Scholarship: Rane Baldwin
Presidential Award for Educational Excellence: Caprice Applequist, Rane Baldwin, Caid Buchman, Stephanie Bunch, Grace Chin, Rebecca Dick, Lindsay Fibranz, Bridget Fowler, Lesli Gilbert, Wade Graham, Lisa Hall, Sasha Harden, Tucker Hawkins, Antonia Jantz, Amanda Keim, Robb Krehbiel, Stephanie LeBlanc, Rebecca Martin, Jaquelynn Moore, Sarah Nealeigh, Sara Norman, Kristen Payne, Heather Peterson, Abigail Ratlief, Richard Reed, Kelly Roane, Amy Sents, Kirstyn Smith, Julia Snell, Douglas Sommers, Ashley Walker

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Tri-Chapter P.E.O. Scholarship: Lisa Hall, Amy Sents

AY P.E.O Scholarship: Kelly Roane

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Steve Jukes Memorial Scholarship: Caid Buchman

Sunflower Bank's Community Ambassadors Scholarship: Amy Reese, Erin Schooler

Harry Singer Foundation Essay Contest Award: Austin Baker, Kristen Bruner, Chrysalus Cofran, Rhea Curran, Tanisha Dixon, Ashley Kresa, Josh Rice, Eric Schroeder, Patrick Selzer, Rachelle Sowards

McPherson Elks Club Scholarship: Antonia Jantz

Elks Most Valuable Student Scholarship: Lesli Gilbert

VFW Voice of Democracy Essay Contest Scholarship: Rane Baldwin, Lindsay Fibranz, Robb Krehbiel

VFW Post 2715 Scholarship: Wade Graham

Dawn Price Memorial Scholarship: Rebecca Martin

Chinberg/Eberle Memorial Nursing Scholarship: Ciomara Rodriguez-Colon

John Matson Memorial Scholarship Fund: Robb Krehbiel, Amy Sents

Martha Cecile Martin Charitable Trust Scholarship: Trent Ruxlow

Paul W. Davis Scholarship: Douglas Sommers

Gary McNaul Memorial Scholarship: Caid Buchman

Dustin M. Bradbury Foundation Scholarship: Steele Pavlovsky, Erin Schooler

Lisa Waldhauer Memorial Scholarship: Michael Davis

June A. Bunting Scholarship: Rhea Curran

McPherson Education Association Teachers' Scholarship: Lisa Hall

Arysta LifeScience North America Scholarship: Amy Sents

Agriculture Future of America: Amy Sents

Kansas 4-H Foundation Orscheln Scholarship: Amy Sents

Wendy's Heisman Scholarship: Tucker Hawkinson, Kristen Payne

Kansas State Thespian Technical Theater Scholarship: Marsha Sterneker

KSPA Regional Awards: Chelsey Becker -- Honorable Mention in Theme Development/Graphics, Grace Chin -- 1st Place in Editorial Cartoon, Amanda Keim -- Honorable Mention in Feature Writing, Rebecca Martin -- 3rd Place in News Writing; Amanda McDaniel -- 3rd Place in Newspaper Design, Kirstyn Smith -- Honorable Mention in Theme Development/Graphics; Julia Snell -- 2nd Place in Newspaper Design

Dale M. Dennis Excellence in Education Award: Amy Sents

Kansas State High School Activities Citizenship Award: Robb Krehbiel, Ciomara Rodriguez-Colon

McPherson County Student Art Exhibition: Caprice Applequist -- 2nd Place in Pastel Drawing; Grace Chin -- Honorable Mention in Mixed Media; Lindsay Fibranz -- 1st Place in Ink Drawing; Meghan Lindteigen -- 2nd Place in Jewelry; Cooper Logback -- 2nd Place in Print Making; Dallas Nelson -- Honorable Mention in Ink Drawing; Justin Patton -- Honorable Mention in Pencil Drawing; Lauren Pauls -- 3rd Place in Print Making; Kristen Payne -- Honorable Mention in Painting; Bridgette Peterson -- Honorable Mention in Jewelry, Honorable Mention in Painting, 3rd Place in Two Dimensional Design; Domingo Sanchez -- Honorable Mention in Pastel, Crayon, Charcoal Drawing; Marsha Sterneker -- 1st Place for Senior Scholarship Booth, Award of Excellence; Justin Walker -- Honorable Mention in Two Dimensional Design; Cathy Weyand -- Honorable Mention in Pastel, Crayon, Charcoal Drawing

Gerry Neustrom Young Artist Challenge: Grace Chin -- Pastel Drawing, Ink Drawing; Lindsay Fibranz -- Design; Cooper Logback -- Design; Holly Nelson -- Printmaking; Bridgette Peterson -- Jewelry

Congressional Art Challenge: Marsha Sterneker -- Honorable Mention in Painting

Scholastic Art Show: Marsha Sterneker -- Gold Key Award

Farmer's Alliance Insurance Community Award: Michelle Pfughoethe

Alliance Employees Inc. Scholarship: Stephanie Bunch

McPherson Area Contractors Scholarship: Matt Bishop, Chad Dubbert

SkillsUSA Kansas: Matt Bishop -- Gold Medal in Community Service at Kansas Championships, South Central District Treasurer, MHS 2007 Chapter Treasurer; Ashley Kresa -- President of South Central District, Voting Delegate at Fall Leadership Conference, MHS 2007 Chapter President; Esther Shandy -- American Spirit Award at Kansas Championships, MHS 2007 Chapter Reporter

First Baptist Church Memorial Scholarship: Caprice Applequist, Brock Moors, Sarah Nealeigh, Brittnie Regier, Erin Schooler, Connor Shaw

Countryside Covenant Church: Natalie Fortune, Sara Norman, Sam Vetter

First Presbyterian Church Scholarship: Austin Curttright, Amy Sents

First United Methodist Church Memorial Scholarship: Leah Clark, Wade Graham, Lauren Pauls, Kristen Payne, Abigail Rattie, Kelly Roane

McPherson Free Methodist Church Scholarship: Daniel Moraine

Trinity Lutheran Church Scholarship Fund: Caid Buchman, Lindsay Fibranz, Amy Sents
Bradley Lansaw
First Congregational United Church of Christ: Alexa Peters
St. Joseph's Senior Stewardship Award: Adam Loecker, Kelli Klein, Stephanie LeBlanc, Michelle Pflughoft, Amy Reese, Douglas Sommers
Dr. Charles J. Apin Catholic Church Scholarship: Chad Dubbert, Kelli Klein, Stephanie LeBlanc, Michelle Pflughoft, Amy Reese, Douglas Sommers
Band/Vocal Performance Scholarship: Katie Cline -- Friends University, Lisa Hall -- Tabor College, Michael Holman -- McPherson College, Robb Krehbiel -- Drake University, Julia Snell -- University of Kansas, Karenah Spencer -- Friends University, Bethany White
McPherson College Baseball Scholarships: Wade Graham -- Cloud County Community College, Adam Loecker -- Hutchinson Community College
Basketball Scholarships: Christopher Crawford -- Central Christian College, Jordan Crawford -- Central Christian College, Trent Ruxlow -- McPherson College
Cross Country/Track Scholarships: Lauren Pauls -- Hutchinson Community College, Bridgette Peterson -- McPherson College
Dance Team Scholarships: Meghan Lindteigen -- Hutchinson Community College, Ciomara Rodriguez-Colon -- Barton County Community College
Football Scholarships: James Anderson -- Baker University, Camron Thissen -- Baker University, Alex Whitehill -- Ft. Hays State University
Theater Scholarship: Skye Johnson -- McPherson College
Volleyball Scholarship: Abigail Rutilf -- McPherson College
Barton County Community College Scholarship: Ciomara Rodriguez-Colon -- Academic Scholarship
Hutchinson Community College Scholarship: Rhea Curran -- Presidential Leadership Scholarship; Janelle Smith -- F.A. & Cora Weesner Scholarship, Annual Fund Drive Scholarship
Baker University Scholarship: Camron Thissen -- University Scholarship, Academic Leadership Scholarship
Bethany College Scholarship: Heather Peterson -- Founders' Scholarship, Lutheran Scholarship
Central Christian College Scholarships: Christopher Crawford -- High Honors Scholarship, Presidential Exam Scholarship, Jordan Crawford -- High Honors Scholarship, Presidential Exam Scholarship
Friends University Scholarship: Katie Cline -- Davis Scholarship, Karenah Spencer -- Dean's Scholarship
Tabor College Scholarship: Lisa Hall -- Honors Scholarship
Dana College Scholarship: Lindsay Fibranz -- Academic Achievement Award, Biology Department Scholarship
Drake University Scholarship: Robb Krehbiel -- Presidential Scholarship, Trustee Scholarship
John Brown University Scholarships: Sarah Nealigh -- Trustee's Scholarship, Erin Schooler -- Professors' Award
North Park University Scholarships: Natalie Fortune -- Leadership Scholarship, Covenant Ministry Award; Sara Norman -- Dean's Scholarship
Southwest Baptist University Scholarship: Caprice Applequist -- Ingman Distinguished Scholars Award Scholarship, Barbara Thomas Award Scholarship, Christian Vocation Scholarship, Forensic Performing Scholarship, Kulmus Scholarship
Emporia State University Scholarships: Chad Dubbert -- Presidential Scholarship, Woodruff Physical Science Scholarship; Kelli Klein -- Presidential Scholarship
Fort Hays State University Scholarships: Stephanie Bunch -- Miller Black & Gold Scholarship, Academic Scholarship; Matt Wescott -- Silver Award; Alex Whitehill -- Bronze Award, Department of Biology
Scholarship
Kansas State University Scholarship: Jessie Bammer -- Academic Achievement Scholarship; Emily Boardman -- Activity Scholarship; Caid Buchman -- Leadership Scholarship; Sasha Harden -- Presidential Scholarship, June H. Sherrid Scholarship; Amanda Keim -- Leadership Scholarship; Rebecca Martin -- Putnam Scholarship, June H. Sherrid Scholarship; Kristen Payne -- Achievement Scholarship; Richard Reed -- Foundation Plus Scholarship, College of Engineering Scholarship; Amy Sents -- Putnam Scholarship, Civic Leadership Scholarship, College of Agriculture Scholarship; Douglas Sommers -- Medallion Scholarship, College of Agriculture Scholarship; Marsha Sterneker -- Theater Excellence Scholarship; Ashley Walker -- Medallion Scholarship
Pittsburg State University Scholarships: Lesli Gilbert -- Academic Achievement Award; Kelly Roane -- Academic Achievement Award
Pittsburg State University Scholarship: Matt Bishop -- Joe & Diahe Levens Scholarship Endowment
University of Kansas Scholarships: Tucker Hawkinson -- Freshman Honors Scholarship, Department of Engineering Scholarship; Julia Snell -- Freshman Honors Scholarship.
The cost of a college degree increases year after year. Under a new proposal from the University of Kansas, the university would freeze tuition for four years. Even though the plan includes a 16 percent increase next year, it appears to be a positive step towards controlling the cost of higher education.

The KU plan, which could begin next fall, will raise current tuition rates by 16 percent. The plan would also lock that rate in place for that freshmen class for the next four years. Freshmen would also receive a schedule showing any annual increases in course and campus fees. This means that students would know approximately 80 percent of their college costs upfront. This is a far cry from how current students deal with college tuition and the unknown increases they face every year. While financial planning might be good, it’s not the only benefit of this program.

Possibly the best thing to come out of this new tuition program is the incentive for a student to finish their degree in four years. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, only 35 percent of college students finish a four-year degree in four years. The biggest benefit to finishing in four years is obviously the cost savings. At $3,400 per semester, those extra years add up fast. The other benefit to the program is that it moves students through the university providing more room for incoming freshmen.

But if the university is going to give people an incentive to graduate, they must be prepared to accommodate them. With all the general and prerequisite classes required to move towards a degree there are a lot of hoops to jump through. One of those hoops is making sure that the classes they need don’t fill up. This could prevent a student from taking a class they need to complete their degree. Another hoop is class schedule flexibility. For some students, it is necessary for them to hold down a job just to be able to afford college. Class schedules must be flexible enough for students to hold their jobs and still acquire their degree in four years.

The new tuition plan being brought forth by KU seems logical as long as the university can live up to their end of the bargain. They must give the students the tools they need to get their degrees in four years. According to Provost Richard Lariviere, if a student takes more than four years to complete their degree it will cost them an extra $1,000 per semester. As long as the students are given every chance to complete that degree in four years then the plan is a success. But, if the student is penalized because the university couldn’t meet their needs then the plan needs to be reevaluated.

— Darren Werth
Area Duke TIP students to be recognized

LAWRENCE—The University of Kansas will host a state recognition program at 1:30 p.m. Sunday, June 3, at the Lied Center for about 400 academically talented seventh-grade students selected for the Duke University Talent Identification Program.

Selection to Duke TIP is based on college entrance-exam scores that students take while still in middle school. The top 5 percent are chosen for the program. Students participate by taking either the SAT or ACT national achievement tests.

Holly N. Mills, Tyler J. Newkirk, and Brileigh A. Scothorn from Burlington and Thadd E. Barker and Trevor D. White from Lebo will be state recognized.

Each Duke TIP student will receive a medallion. The state recognition ceremonies honor seventh graders who have earned scores above the average scores of college-bound high school seniors. Around 900 students in the Kansas region qualified. Only 400 are expected to attend the ceremony.
KU proposes tuition freeze for freshmen

In an effort to make the cost of getting an education predictable, The University of Kansas has proposed a plan that would freeze tuition rates for incoming freshmen for four years.

If the plan is approved by the Kansas Board of Regents, first time freshmen also would have the option of paying a fixed rate for student housing for two years.

The “Four-Year Tuition Compact” was presented last Thursday to the regents, who will vote on tuition proposals next month.

Kansas State last Thursday proposed a 7.9 percent increase in tuition and fees for resident students; Wichita State, 6.4 percent; Emporia State, 9.5 percent; Pittsburg State, 7.1 percent; and Fort Hays State, 5.1 percent.

The University of Kansas plan, which would begin next fall for incoming freshmen, would increase tuition rates at the university to nearly 16 percent more than current levels but keep that rate the same for four years.

Freshmen also would get a schedule showing annual increases in course and campus fees, meaning they would know about 80 percent of their college costs in advance.

Under the plan, resident freshmen would pay $213 per credit hour, which is 15.9 percent more than the current rate of $183.75. For full-time, resident freshmen, tuition would be $3,408 per semester, $468 more than this year.

A full-time, out-of-state resident would pay $8,960 a semester.

“We want to get away from the whipsaw effect of tuition increases over the past 30 years,” university Provost Richard Lariviere said.

The program has another goal: increasing the number of students who complete degrees in four years.

“Completing four-year academic programs in four years is a high priority,” Chancellor Robert Hemenway said. “By offering no tuition increase for four years, we are giving students a powerful incentive to finish their degrees on time.”

Lariviere estimated it would cost students who take more than four years to complete a degree an extra $1,000 per semester.

To protect against inflation, Lariviere said the university would ask for a new tuition rate for each incoming freshman class.

Hannah Love, student body president, said she supported the proposal.

“I think it is a solution to help stabilize those numbers and curb those increases that we continue to see,” said Love, a junior from Dodge City.

For other students, the university is proposing a 7.3 percent increase in tuition and fees for resident undergraduates and 6.5 percent for nonresident undergraduates. And the university has asked for a 7.3 percent increase in tuition and fees for resident graduate students and a 6.6 percent increase for nonresident graduate students.
Anne Sims is welcomed into honor society

LAWRENCE—Anne M. Sims of Paola was among 103 new members welcomed on Saturday into the University of Kansas Alpha Chapter of Phi Beta Kappa academic honor society at Woodruff Auditorium in the Kansas Union.

KU’s Alpha chapter, founded in 1890, was the first chapter established west of the Mississippi.

Miss Sims is the daughter of Warren and Cristie Sims. She is a senior studying for a bachelor of arts degree in communication studies. She is a graduate of Paola High School.

Election to Phi Beta Kappa recognizes a student’s high academic achievement while pursuing a broad and substantive liberal arts curriculum. To be eligible for consideration for membership, students must have senior status and a minimum grade-point average of 3.65 on a 4.0 scale.
Rising tuition
Can board of regents find remedy for ever-increasing college costs?

College tuition costs have risen to the point they prohibit some students from even considering a college education. Others who decide to tackle college with the aid of scholarships and hefty student loans question how massive their total debt will be after completing their degree. This year will be no different.

Tuition is expected to increase more than 16 percent to $3,572 per semester for an average 15 hours for new incoming freshmen at the University of Kansas, if a plan presented to the Kansas Board of Regents passes muster. However, this plan includes a bonus – tuition will remain the same for the four years it takes students to earn their bachelor’s degree. The proposed four-year tuition compact provides some solid motivation to complete a degree on time since rates increase for education required after four years. This goal serves the needs of students and universities.

Kansas college tuition increased an average of 9 percent per year during the past 30 years with some increases as high as 25 percent. That pattern of unpredictability makes it difficult to budget college expenses, especially because food, lodging and books have been on a steep incline, too. The proposed compact may include a component to hold housing costs for two years as well. That kind of predictability could soothe some anxiety during college.

Kansas universities, among others, increased tuition rates to replace state funding, which hasn’t kept pace with inflation and other needs for increased spending. Even if this proposal is implemented, it won’t keep tuition rates for other students from increasing annually. Transfer students, returning students and others would still face typical annual tuition increases. Out-of-state students, in particular, would pay $560 per credit hour compared to resident tuition of $213 per credit hour.

The board of regents will discuss and perhaps decide on this proposal and other tuition increases during its regular meeting next month. Other proposed tuition increases range from 5.1 percent at Fort Hays State University to 9.5 percent at Emporia State University.

It is difficult to know how this plan might work but an educated guess suggests it is worth a try.

— Jeanny Sharp, Editor and publisher
Jordan Gray, Ottawa Middle School, has been accepted to the 2007 Duke TIP Summer Studies Program. She will study American Short Story at the University of Kansas over a three-week period. She will be one of 300 students in the program at KU. Jordan said she looks forward to meeting other students of her age and similar interests.

She plans to major in photography in college and loves to travel. She is the daughter of Michelle Gray, Ottawa, and Andrew Gray, Topeka.
Trust us on this — college tuition is a bargain in Kansas. Yes, we know tuition costs are going up faster than the price of gasoline. We know over the past 10 years tuition and fees years have skyrocketed — a whopping 166 percent at The University of Kansas, 144 percent at Kansas State University and, closer to home, 82 percent at Washburn University.

We know college students are piling up debt as they grapple with ways to absorb those annual tuition increases.

We know Washburn already has approved charging students $10 more per credit hour for the 2007-08 school year, and we know KU and K-State are poised to raise their tuition, as well.

So, it’s understandable that parents forced to dig deeper and deeper each year to send their sons and daughters to college might be excused for asking: What bargain?

The answer is relative. Compared to 10 years ago when in-state tuition was around $3,000, next year’s projection of $5,500 at Washburn doesn’t sound much like a bargain.

But compared to institutions in our neighboring states, as well as across the country, it is.

The national average for tuition during the current 2006-07 school year was $5,836, and both Kansas and Kansas State were significantly lower than their Big 12 Conference brothers in both resident and non-resident tuition.

Granted, that won’t ease the pain when checks have to be written for the fall semester, but at least there won’t be the feeling students are being gouged.

Besides, even with the higher tuition, a college education remains a proven investment. Studies show college graduates earn enough more in their
lifetimes than non-college graduates to pay for their education many times over.

Studies also show, unfortunately, that most students incur a significant amount of debt paying for that education. Two-thirds of college graduates will leave school in debt — typically about $19,000 worth.

While the rule of thumb for college students is to not take on more debt than your expected first-year salary, the escalating tuition costs make that a daunting challenge.

That’s where advance planning comes in. It has never been more important for parents to start putting away money early for college. The 529 college savings plan, which grows tax-deferred and is tax-free when withdrawn if used for qualified education expenses, is one of the most popular saving plans.

Likewise, students must do their share. College isn’t a four- or five-year party. Students should live frugally at school and borrow as little as possible.

"Live like a student when you're in school so you don't have to live like a student after you graduate," says Ivan Nalibotsky, a financial adviser with Capital Solutions Group in Bethesda, Md.

Last week, when Washburn’s Board of Regents approved the $10-per-hour hike, the lone dissenting vote was cast by Mayor Bill Bunten, who feared the increase would mean "some people will not be able to go to school."

Statistics show, however, the tuition increases the last decade have had little impact on enrollment. Maybe students know a bargain when they see one.

By the Topeka Capital-Journal Editorial Board