Holy health care!

The heat is up in Lawrence, Kansas City and Topeka over the fate of the Kansas University Medical Center.

Many leaders in those communities, including KU’s chancellor and the governor, are warm to see the Med Center and its hospital affiliate with the large St. Luke’s Hospital network in Kansas City, Mo.

This would improve the Med Center’s chance of becoming a recognized national center for cancer research, those leaders say.

Such a designation would help KU and the greater Kansas City region become a hot spot for biomedical research in the future.

But some folks, including at least a few at the Lawrence Journal-World newspaper, are less than lukewarm about the affiliation.

They say the Kansas University Hospital at the Med Center might lose health care professionals, patients and money to Missouri. And they say the affiliation is not needed to get the desired designation.

This debate boiled up in the Kansas Legislature, where Speaker of the House Melvin Neufeld stirred up a successful effort to defeat the affiliation decision by wrapping it in red tape. He argued Kansas should not risk losing precious doctors or other health care professionals.

Gov. Sebelius line-item vetoed what she saw as this not-so-hot potato.

From out here in south central Kansas, it all looks a little silly.

But we know it’s not because we know our state is committed to bioscience research as an economic engine. We want some of good stuff, too.

The respected Journal-World has editorially questioned the motives of affiliation advocates. Chancellor Robert Hemenway has verbally spanked his adversaries for failing to understand the hospital’s role under the separate authority established for the Med Center by the Legislature itself in 1998.

We encourage our lawmakers and their colleagues to cool down this debate and uphold the governor’s decision.
veto. It makes no sense to turn off the fire under Kansas’ bioscience ambitions now.
Michael Philips, senior majoring in journalism (news and information), at the University of Kansas, and son of Donna and David Phillips of Wichita, placed 12th in sports writing in the national Hearst Journalism Awards competition.

The William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications at KU placed first in the Intercollegiate Writing Competition. KU students won a total $5,200 in the six writing contests, and the journalism school received matching funds plus $10,000 for its first-place finish.
University of Kansas students served others at Alternative Spring Breaks sites in several U.S. locations. The students are listed with their position, parents' name and location they served.

- **Tracy Wineinger**, co-director, daughter of Billy and Sheryl Wineinger of Andover; **Emma Groover**, daughter of Donald and Brenda Groover of Hesston, Best Friends Animal Sanctuary (a no-kill animal shelter), Kanab, Utah; **Katherine Marten**, daughter of Frederick and Dena Marten, **Micheal Hong Banh**, site leader, son of Kien and Tevanechit Banh, all of Wichita, Newcomer Center (provides support for English as a second language), Arlington Heights, Ill.; **Anne Whealdon**, daughter of Tom and Kristy Whealdon of Wichita, **Thao-Linh Thi Nguyen**, daughter of Quy and Linh Nguyen, **Trey Anderson**, site leader, son of Bruce and Lana Anderson, all of Wichita, Kettle Moraine State Park (students performed trail work, removal of invasive plant species and building, staining and installing benches), Eagle, Wis.; **Kate McConnell**, daughter of Robert and Jill McConnell of Wichita, TreeUtah (oversees plantings at sites throughout Utah and educates and trains the public in tree stewardship), Salt Lake City; **Cortney White**, daughter of Clinton and Abigail White of Wichita, South Carolina School for the Deaf and the Blind (works with deaf, blind and sensory-disabled individuals of all ages to provide educational, vocational and developmental services), Spartanburg, S.C.; **Jordan Pack**, son of Janet Pack, **Elena Park**, daughter of Sonha Park, all of Wichita, Chicago Cares (affiliate of Hands On Network, volunteer management and mobilization organizations), Chicago, Ill., Site Leader; **Jason Shimanek**, site leaders, son of Paul and Denise Shimanek of Wichita, Give Kids the World (not-for-profit wish-granting resort that creates memories for children who have life-threatening illnesses), Kissimmee, Fla.
Senators take up $640 million plan to fix universities

Modest plan fails in House

TOPEKA (AP) — A plan for giving state universities $640 million over five years to fix long-neglected buildings faced scrutiny today in the Senate, a day after the House rejected a far more modest proposal.

The Senate proposal mixes no-interest loans, anticipated gambling dollars and using tax credits to lure dollars from private donors. It also provides some help to community colleges, vocational colleges and Washburn University in Topeka.

Senate leaders hoped their chamber would pass it Friday and send it to the House. The final version of a repairs plan will be written by House and Senate negotiators after the two chambers approve rival bills, but so far, the House has had trouble settling on a plan.

A House plan would have set aside $100 million for university repairs over three years, but when it was offered as an amendment to a bill meant to wrap up budget issues for the year, it failed, 61-61. Some House members questioned whether the state could afford it, while others derided it as insufficient.

Universities' deteriorating buildings are a pressing issue to higher education officials and legislative leaders. The Board of Regents, which oversees higher ed, estimates that universities have a $663 million backlog of repairs and need an additional $69 million a year for maintenance to keep it from growing.

"The thing is, we know it's a huge problem. We know we have to do something about it," said Rep. Barbara Ballard, D-Lawrence, whose district includes part of the University of Kansas campus. "I think we will, but like everything else, it's not an easy process."

The Senate plan is designed to be a comprehensive solution for the universities, while aiding the other institutions.

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Plan

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It includes $200 million in no-interest loans, though it doesn’t say how the institutions receiving them would pay them back.

It sets aside $115 million in revenues from new casinos and slot machines at dog and horse tracks, allowed under legislation approved this year. Also, it assumes nearly $65 million in private funds, leveraged by tax credits.

The Senate Ways and Means Committee drafted much of the proposal last week, and the Assessment and Taxation Committee finished up work on the measure Thursday.

The House’s vote Thursday came a day after its Appropriations Committee failed to endorse a multiyear repairs plan and some members suggested legislators might give the universities a one-time infusion of cash and study their problems this summer and fall.

Some conservative Republicans don’t think the state can afford to commit to setting aside tens of millions of dollars without creating budget problems.

“At what point are we willing to draw the line and say we’re not willing to spend money hand over fist?” said Rep. Lance Kinzer, R-Olathe.

Rep. Bill Otto, R-LeRoy, said such plans are geared toward helping the University of Kansas and Kansas State University far more than smaller universities or community colleges. Otto said smaller institutions “don’t come crying to us, wanting more money.”

According to the regents, the two biggest universities account for 63 percent of the backlog.

“I don’t have any sympathy,” said Otto, who voted “no” and pledged to keep doing so.

The House plan also lost votes because some legislators thought it was too small.

“It does not actually address the real need that we have,” Rep. Lee Tafanelli, R-Ozawkie, the Appropriations Committee’s vice chairman, said during the debate.

“What we need is a long-term, comprehensive plan.”

But other House members said the modest plan would send a positive message — acknowledging the final version will be written by House and Senate negotiators after the chambers pass rival bills.
HALSTEAD – Once again the Kansas Humanities Council, in conjunction with the Halstead Public Library, has sent a member of its speakers’ bureau to bring area history to life for Halstead residents.

Most of us know something about Bernhard Warkentin and Turkey red wheat, but Norman E. Saul, professor of Russian history at the University of Kansas, wove the entire story together April 17 for an appreciative audience of 40 at the Learning Center for Health.

Dr. Saul, who received his Ph.D. from Columbia University, used maps to trace the movement of three major farming groups from Western Europe to Russia to America between 1763 and 1914. His free presentation, "The Kansas Miracle: Mennonites, Volga Germans, and Turkey Red Wheat," included a discussion of the Kansas flour industry with vintage photographs of Newton’s Monarch Mill, Lindsborg and Larabee Mills, and Smoky Valley Rollers Mill.

Beginning in the 18th century, Saul said, Mennonite, Catholic, and Lutheran farmers from the Netherlands and Switzerland emigrated to Germany, seeking religious freedoms. When those freedoms eroded in the 1780s, they moved to Russia, where Catherine the Great had begun offering new settlers free land and exemption from taxes and military conscription.

One large group established farming communities in the Crimea, north of the Black Sea, and became known as the Crimean Mennonites. Bernhard Warkentin, son of a wealthy miller, was born in 1847 in this area, near the Molotchna (“Milky”) River. Another population, Volga Germans, settled along the Volga River, and a Swiss group also entered the Ukraine during this period.

In 1871, Saul continued, Russia revoked its favorable policies. The three settlements then began their long treks to Canada, the United States, Mexico, and Brazil. Railroads played a major role in the migration: well-established Russian railways provided easy access to European seaports, while American rail companies were advertising cheap midwestern land.

Warkentin arrived in New York in 1871 and eventually settled here in Halstead. Between 1874 and 1884, he arranged for over 5,000 Mennonites to come to Kansas, promoting the purchase of one million acres of land at $3 an acre from the Santa Fe Railroad.

These new settlers first planted a soft winter wheat popular in the eastern United States, but it proved unsuitable for our Midwest climate. In 1886 the first crop of Ukrainian or “Turkey red” wheat was grown in Marion County. It was so successful that Russian immigrants began bringing trunkfuls of the wheat to America; by 1918 wheat had outpaced corn as Kansas’ dominant crop.

Dr. Saul, whose research has taken him to Vienna, Helsinki, Moscow, St. Petersburg, and London, addressed the tale of Anna, a little Crimean girl who selected her father’s best red wheat kernels and brought them to America. This story is a myth, he said; such a small amount of grain could not have produced a financially successful crop.

The invention of steel rollers in 1878 and conversion from water power to steam revolutionized the flour milling industry, making wheat production more and more profitable. In 1880, the Halstead Mill produced 400 barrels of flour per day. Milling made cowtowns permanent, said Saul, noting that a community’s post office and newspaper were usually established the same year as its mill.

Even the 20th century’s Dust Bowl years and consolidation of the mills, he added, could not destroy the Kansas
miracle.

"I grew up on a farm in Wabash County, Indiana," concluded Saul, who has written extensively on international relations and also on Warkentin. "I've always been interested in farming."
LAWRENCE — Lindsey Miles, Halstead, is a member of the University of Kansas rowing team. On Saturday, April 7, the team won the 2007 Kansas Cup at Burcham Park in Lawrence.

First varsity eight boat, in which Miles was on, came from behind in the last race of the day to defeat Kansas State’s boat by inches. With the 12-10 victory over their Sunflower State rivals, the Jayhawks competed in their last home race of the season and honored nine seniors in their final Kansas River regatta.

Saturday was senior day and also marks the last home race for Miles who is a senior this season. Miles is working toward her degree in nursing at KU.
KU's (mostly) Jewish sorority is thriving

By Rick Hellman

LAWRENCE, Kan. — Tucked away on the shady western slope of Mount Oread, the traditionally Jewish sorority Sigma Delta Tau is thriving. With 39 residents, the house is full. An equal number of sisters live off campus but stop by 1625 Edgehill Road almost daily to study and hang out.

Vice President for Recruitment Jen Neumann says the women of SDT “are dedicated to each other, to our philanthropic activities and to the community, Greek and otherwise.”

President Stephanie Meyer says the women of the Beta Chi chapter are highly involved throughout the campus. “We have women in Hillel, in Student Senate, in leadership roles with a lot of different student organizations,” she said.

Because the sorority was founded in 1917 by a group of Jewish women who had felt the sting of discrimination, Sigma Delta Tau is explicitly open to all. And yet, it’s traditionally Jewish, and so most chapters have 50 to 100 percent Jewish membership, Neumann said. “Here, we’re a majority Jewish,” she said.

Meyer noted, however, that there are several non-Jews among the 80 members, including some members of the executive board.

The Beta Chi chapter at KU was chartered in 1985 and acquired its house in 1987. Besides Kansas City, the chapter draws members from cities like Chicago, Dallas, Minneapolis/St. Paul, St. Louis and Atlanta. SDT members tend to choose majors like journalism, education, psychology and science.

The house is “in a great location; close to campus and wherever you need to get to – Massachusetts Street or the rec center. ... It’s very safe,” Neumann said.

It costs between $5,000 and $6,000 a year to live at the house. That includes room and board, monthly education sessions, social events and more.

Of course, the young women participate in charitable activities, both on their own and in concert with other Greek organizations. SDT’s national charity is Prevent Child Abuse America, and the KU women held a dance marathon at the Kansas Union Ballroom this year to raise money for that.

Assistant recruitment chair Allissa Goldstein recommends the SDT lifestyle. “I come over just to hang out, eat meals,” said the Denver sophomore. “It’s like going over to your friends’ house. And it’s a chance to be away from the dorms.”

For more information, visit the chapter’s Web site. http://groups.ku.edu/~sdt/. Or contact Goldstein by phone, (303) 506-8555, or e-mail: goldsad@ku.edu.
KU Hillel welcomed Kansas City Star sports columnist Joe Posnanski (far right) to the University of Kansas to speak on his new book, “The Soul of Baseball.” He read excerpts from the book and talked about his road trip with Negro League Baseball star Buck O’Neil. Posnanski continued with a discussion about the Hall of Fame, its voting process and why he believes O’Neil should be a member. Pictured here with Posnanski are (back row, from left) Ben Cohen and Jack Conner; front row) Casey Topol and Elliot Kort.
College repairs plan fails

BY JOHN HANNA
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

TOPEKA — A modest plan for helping state universities fix long-neglected buildings narrowly failed Thursday in the House, while a much larger plan cleared a Senate committee.

The House plan would have set aside $100 million for university repairs over three years, but when it was offered as an amendment to a bill meant to wrap up budget issues for the year, it failed, 61-61. Some House members questioned whether the state could afford it, while others derided it as insufficient.

Senators’ plan would provide $640 million to the universities, community colleges, technical colleges and Washburn University in Topeka over the next five years. The total includes gambling dollars, no-interest loans and tax credits for private donors.

The Ways and Means Committee drafted much of the proposal last week, and the Assessment and Taxation Committee finished up work on the measure Thursday. The Senate planned to debate it Friday.

Universities’ deteriorating buildings are a pressing issue to higher education officials and legislative leaders. The Board of Regents, which oversees higher ed, estimates that universities have a $663 million backlog of repairs and need an additional $69 million a year for maintenance to keep it from growing.

“The thing is, we know it’s a huge problem. We know we have to do something about it,” said Rep. Barbara Ballard, D-Lawrence, whose district includes part of the University of Kansas campus. “I think we will, but like everything else, it’s not an easy process.”

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And some conservative Republicans don’t think the state can afford to commit to setting aside tens of millions of dollars without creating budget problems.

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According to the regents, the two biggest universities account for 63 percent of the backlog.

“I don’t have any sympathy,” said Otto, who voted “no” and pledged to keep doing so.

On Wednesday, Appropriations Committee chairwoman Sharon Schwartz said she had no plans to take up the repairs issue again. But she scheduled a meeting for Friday to discuss drafting a new plan and said she’d been approached by committee members who wanted to take another run at it.
Hannah Faith Miller has recently been re-elected as president of Rieger Academic Scholarship Hall. She is the daughter of Larry and Tam Miller, Pittsburg, and Robin and Larry Dushane, Grove, Okla.

Miller accepted to KU program

She has maintained a 3.9 grade point average for her first two years at KU and has recently been accepted into the College of Pharmacy at the University of Kansas, beginning the 2007 fall semester.