Group looks across state to develop leaders

BY CHRISTINA M. WOODS
The Wichita Eagle

The question is intentionally broad: “Of all the things we could do to cultivate civic leadership in Kansas, what should we do?”

Answers from six diverse focus groups this month could help organizers of the nonprofit Kansas Leadership Center create initiatives to improve leadership in communities, businesses and institutions across the state.

“Reaching out to Kansans all across the state will give the leadership center the opportunity to hear perspectives that, otherwise, may never have been voiced,” said Steve Coen, vice president for administration for the Kansas Health Foundation, which is awarding the leadership center $30 million over 10 years. “This upfront investment of time and energy is exactly what it will take to establish the leadership center as a credible resource for generations of Kansas leaders.”

Center organizers and facilitators with Wichita State University’s Self-Help Network have conducted the focus groups, which have zeroed in on rural, urban and racial/ethnic issues, among others.

“It sounded like their intentions are pretty good,” said Charles Rivera, a board member for the Wichita Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, who attended a focus group with Hispanics last week. “They’re reaching across a lot of ethnic boundaries.”

A lack of Hispanic leaders, concerns about access to health care, and higher education were some of the issues the group discussed, Rivera said.

Susan Keim, who lives in Lawrence and is working on a doctorate in public administration at the University of Kansas, participated in a focus group on urban issues. She said she thinks the center’s mission could create a national model.

“Nothing like this has ever been done before in the entire country, probably the entire world,” she said, “and so they don’t take this responsibility lightly and it shows.”

Organizers have also interviewed more than 20 professionals in areas from economics to education to medicine.

Ed O’Malley, a former state legislator from Johnson County who is the president and chief executive of the leadership center, said specific initiatives could be announced in early 2008.

O’Malley said Wichitans, unlike other Kansans, are fortunate to have gone through a similar process during
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Visioneering Wichita, the city's 20-year improvement plan, which kicked off in 2004.

"We are the stewards of an amazing gift that's been given to the people of Kansas but we can't do it on our own," O'Malley said about the importance of gathering input. "We simply hope people are not talked out."

Rep. Oletha Faust-Goudeau, who served with O'Malley in the Legislature, said she's confident in his leadership.

"I know he's passionate and willing to listen, learn and help address the need," Faust-Goudeau said.

"I know the program is fairly new, I know it's going to take a while to implement and address the issues ... but I'm banking on the leadership center and hopeful for some results."

Organizers say Kansans' cooperative spirit and volunteerism are advantages when trying to grow leaders.

The Corporation for National and Community Service recently released a study that ranked Kansas in the top five states for its volunteerism.

According to the report, a little more than one-fourth of Kansans between ages 16 and 24 are volunteers, slightly more than the national average. About half of people ages 35 to 54 volunteer, compared with a third of adults nationwide. And one-third of those over age 65 in Kansas are volunteers, compared with one-fourth nationwide.

Siobhan Dugan, public affairs specialist for the corporation, said Kansas' $30 million investment in leadership is telling.

"Certainly the project that's going on in Kansas sounds like it's a very good one that should have long-term results for civic leadership within the state," Dugan said. "We applaud those initiatives."

Reach Christina M. Woods at 316-269-6791 or cwoods@wichitaeagle.com.
Stephanie Gomez has been selected to serve on the Board of Class Officers at the University of Kansas for 2007-08.

Gomez, the daughter of Steven and Diana Gomez of Newton, is a senior in human biology and Spanish.
Sorority pledges announced

LAWRENCE — Sororities at the University of Kansas pledged 567 women during fall formal recruitment, the KU Panhellenic Association has announced.

The number represents an increase from 2006 fall recruitment when 550 students affiliated with sororities.

More than 750 women took part in recruitment, and all 13 of KU’s Panhellenic Association sororities added new members, said Laura Bauer, program director for Fraternity and Sorority Life.

Membership bids were extended to women who completed the recruitment process.

Bauer said this year the Panhellenic Association implemented an online recruitment tool, Campus Director, which allowed women to create an account and register online for recruitment. The new system also allowed the recruitment counselors and sorority chapters to perform all of their data entry and new member updates online.

Sororities that are part of KU’s Panhellenic Association are Alpha Chi Omega, Alpha Delta Pi, Alpha Gamma Delta, Chi Omega, Delta Delta Delta, Delta Gamma, Gamma Phi Beta, Kappa Alpha Theta, Kappa Delta, Kappa Kappa Gamma, Pi Beta Phi, Sigma Delta Tau and Sigma Kappa. Those students now listed as pledges are:

Wellington
Lyndsay Noel Leisinger, daughter of Darryll and Lynda Leisinger, Alpha Delta Pi
Jessica Anne Miller, daughter of Dianne Miller, Chi Omega

Clearwater
Chelsea Anne Papish, daughter of Laura and David Papish, Sigma Delta Tau

Mulvane
Caitlin Maureen Wise, daughter of Jackie and Forrest Wise, Delta Gamma
Multicultural grant

A group of six students in The Multicultural Scholars Program at Cowley County Community College, including Ashley Williams of Wellington, have been awarded a three-year, $515,157 grant from the U.S. Department of Education Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education through the University of Kansas. Cowley was chosen along with Kansas City Community College and Donnelly College in Kansas City. Students are, from left to right, Pablo Fuentes, Janee Gabbard, Immanuel Thompson, Ashley Williams of Wellington, Robert Young and Isiah Lykes.
Students from Sumner County to be honored

WELLINGTON — Students from seven Kansas high schools will be honored Wednesday, Sept. 19, by the University of Kansas Alumni Association and KU Endowment.

A total of 37 seniors from high schools in Sumner County will be recognized for their academic achievements and named Kansas Honor Scholars at a

6:30 p.m. dinner program at Wellington High School.

The Kansas Honors Program began in 1971 and has honored

more than 100,000 students. Scholars rank in the top 10 percent of their high school senior classes and are selected regardless of curricula, majors, occupational plans or higher-education goals. Honorees’ names are listed online at www.news.ku.edu/2007/august/29/khpwellington.shtml.

During the ceremony, each student will receive an American Heritage Dictionary in hardback and CD versions, presented by Danny Lewis, assistant director of alumni programs for the KU Alumni Association.

David Johnston, director of marketing and Internet services for the KU Alumni Association, will speak to the students and their parents and guests.

The Kansas Honors Program is made possible through KU Endowment and proceeds from the Jayhawk license plate program. Those students being honored are:
Wellington
Jamin Dodson
Madison Hughes
Tiffany Kimbel
Mary Leftwich
Sarah Jeanne Mitchell
Logan Neises
Kelsey Rains
Kayla Richmond
Zakaria Tazkargy
Brittney Ward
Alice White
Loryn
Zoglmann

Argonia
Ashley Adams
Hannah Hemberger

Belle Plaine
Amber Balsters
Danielle DeWitt
Andrew Fillmore
Bridget Frank
Kaylee Hervey
Jamie Hyle
Judith Marks
Kristen McDonnell
Cooper Stewart
Miriam Watts
Amy White

Caldwell
Abbey Bannister
Hayley Bruey

Conway Springs
Jessica Ast
Emily Gerber
Lori Seiwert
Jennifer Walker

Oxford
KaCee Carson
Megan Hicks
Lynsey Metz

South Haven
Megan Berry
Cass Myers
Alicia Rayl
KU to honor Sumner County seniors Sept. 19

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Honored students will be guests of the alumni association and KU Endowment; parents and area alumni are welcome to attend at a cost of $10 each.

Community volunteers collect reservations, coordinate details and serve as local contacts for the event. Cathy Mitchell, David Carr and Colette Kocour, all of Wellington, are site coordinators.

The Kansas Honors Program is made possible through KU Endowment and proceeds from the Jayhawk license plate program.

Students to be honored from South Haven High School include:

Megan Berry,
Cass Myers
Alicia Rayl