Experiences from China

By John Kuhn

China. For us, the word conjures up exotic images: dragons, gongs, an Orientalist vision of martial arts and bamboo. Recently, I (who'd never been off the continent) was provided the chance to test these notions during a KU-sponsored trip. We aimed at the broadest possible view of China, visiting ancient temples and modern malls, rural Shaanxi and downtown Shanghai.

For me, the most striking part of this experience was our visit to a farming village in central China. Initially alien, it resembled something out of medieval Europe: scythe-wielding old women harvested wheat, irrigation was performed with furrows, not pipes, and the resulting grain was spread on the roads to be threshed by the wheels of passing vehicles before being repeatedly raked to separate out the chaff.

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John Kuhn

China: Student travels overseas

These sights were accompanied by even more bizarre images: flooded lotus fields reflected the sun and the occasional temple dotted the roadside.

However, the strangest part of my time in rural central China was not how alien everything felt, but how familiar it seemed. This area is geographically strikingly similar to Kansas — the same terrain, rainfall, primary crops. It was uncanny, really, to travel to literally the opposite side of the world and discover again the landscape of my childhood. And not just the landscape, though the endless wheat fields, dirt roads and cloudless skies were there. The real shock was the people: the same sunburnt farmers talked shop outside the local store, the same sulky teenage girls idly raked the wheat, and the same wives brought dinner out to the fields.

The primary lesson in this, of course, is that Durrell is right. The people I met were, in translation, markedly similar to the Kansans I grew up with. The irrelevance of distance and the primacy of agriculture is a compelling truth I could not have imagined before my trip.

Editor's note: Kuhn is from slightly north of El Dorado.
(Unauthorized mailing of records investigated at KU)

TOPEKA (AP) — Records discarded at the University of Kansas were mailed anonymously to three newspapers, prompting a campus investigation Wednesday. It was the second report in two months of such a breach of students' privacy.

The records included what appeared to be graded exams, job applications, change-of-grade forms, class rosters, seating charts and copies of health insurance cards and immigration forms, according to editors at the newspapers. Some of the documents contained credit card numbers, Social Security numbers and student identification numbers, they said.

The records were mailed in Manila envelopes, with a letter in each packet. Each letter said the papers had come from the university’s math department or its recycling center. The letter’s writers claimed to be former math teaching assistants or current employees of the recycling center, and they were critical of how the math department handled its records.

“Our No. 1 concern is protecting these individuals from any compounded exposure and launching an investigation,” university spokeswoman Lynn Bretz said.

Bretz also issued a statement asking news organizations that had received the documents to return them. She said doing so would protect patients’ privacy and allow the university to contact students whose records were mailed. Also, she said the university needed the documents as evidence in its investigation.

In July, The University Daily Kansan, the campus newspaper, reported that documents were left in vacant offices in Wescoe Hall, which was being renovated. The documents included graded exams, student essays and schedule-changing forms. Earlier this month, university officials announced a new program to improve the protection of private information.
Roberts: Education should be a higher priority in Congress

By NICK SLOAN
Kansan Staff Writer

U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts (R-Kan.) says education should be more important to legislators - right up at the top alongside national security and health care.

The senator sat down for an interview with the Kansan earlier this month following an appearance at Bryant preschool in Kansas City, Kan., in which he presented a $3.4 million grant to the Wyandotte County Early Reading program.

Roberts, visiting the school with U.S. Deputy Secretary of Education Raymond Simon and University of Kansas Chancellor Robert Hemenway, told the Kansan education should be a higher priority on the national radar.

"National security is our fundamental job, but when you talk to people, they are concerned about education," he said. "They are worried about educational issues. I think education is getting a little shortchanged."

Primary evidence for the lack of concentration on education can be found in recent presidential debates. So far, questions ranging from issues such as national security, illegal immigration and health care have dominated debate topics, and education has barely received any airtime.

However, Roberts said his constituents who attend town hall meetings and send electronic communications always are concerned with domestic issues such as health care and education.

Roberts said failures in education can trickle down in other aspects of a child's life outside the classroom.

"If you are not able to get a hold of young people and give them the opportunities to learn language skills, their chances of success are significantly less," he said. "Their ability to

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U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts sat down for an interview with the Kansan’s editorial staff in April (pictured). This month, he sat down again for a conversation with the Kansan’s Nick Sloan.
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communicate is hampered a great deal." Roberts said students are being challenged to learn English and more opportunities should be available – adding that in some cases, 40 percent of the students in the classrooms he visits do not speak English at home.

He said Head Start and other programs in Wyandotte County and Kansas help address this issue.

"Head Start does this and has done it for years," he said. "Teachers will get better training. Young people will get better because of the improved teaching. I can’t think of anything more important in terms of reading."

Roberts visits many classrooms each year – including Frank Rushton Elementary School earlier this year in Kansas City, Kan. – in order to read to students.

The senator currently serves on the Standing Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

According to Roberts, a lot of negative things have been said in Washington D.C. about the No Child Left Behind act, which is currently facing challenges.

Among Roberts' highest concerns for No Child Left Behind is funding for special education programs outlined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Roberts said the federal government promised to fund 40 percent, but Washington is only funding between 16 and 17 percent of it.

"You cannot go back on your intent," Roberts said. "It's an unfounded mandate – pay for it. It would free up local tax dollars for other programs. It's definitely a budget issue."
Lew Perkins, Director of Athletics at the University of Kansas, visited with the Leavenworth Lions Club on Sept. 20 at the Riverfront Community Center. Perkins began the meeting with an impromptu fundraising event in which members of the Pride had to pay fines based on their allegiance to KU, Kansas State University, the University of Missouri and other schools. A total of $240 was raised and will benefit the Lions Scholarship Fund.

Perkins shared several interesting facts about KU athletics with the Pride. He said that KU has 600 student athletes and approximately one-third of them come from the state of Kansas.

A total of 18 sports are played at the university. Perkins also said that the athletic department budget is currently at $54 million, which is an increase of $30 million over the past four years.

Recent construction projects include renovations to Allen Field House, a $31-million football training complex, which will open next summer, and a $7-million boat house for the rowing team.
K-State, KU federal denied grant to benefit education of migrant children

By Whitney Hodgink
KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

K-State and the University of Kansas were denied a federal grant to fund the first year of college for children of migrant or seasonal farmers.

"KSU received a letter Aug. 15 advising the school their proposal was not being funded," said Gregg Wiggins, a public affairs officer for the U.S. Department of Education. "This is a competitive grant program, and not every applicant receives a grant."

Bob Fanning, assistant director of K-State's English as a Second Language program, said he hoped Kansas' ranking as seventh in the nation for the number of migrant and seasonal farm workers would have improved K-State's chances of receiving funding.

But the $2.1 million grant request K-State submitted, which would have lasted for five years and provided tuition for 148 students, was denied for reasons that are yet unknown, said Fanning, who also is the director of Project Destiny, a program that helps migrant workers' children finish high school.

The College Assistance Migrant Program is a federal grant from the U.S. Department of Education to fund the first year of college for children of migratory or seasonal farm-workers.

"K-State is the first land-grant university in the nation," Fanning said. "Because CAMP focuses on individuals who are provided seasonal and migrant farm work experience, it seemed like a perfect match between the intention of our school and CAMP's role in serving those kind of students."

Fanning said he requested an explanation from the U.S. Department of Education as to why K-State's proposal was rejected and will take those comments into consideration when redrafting the grant in time for the next deadline in February.

"I knew when we applied for the project we would be at a disadvantage," Fanning said. "It wasn't that we didn't have an excellent proposal, but the evaluation process of the applications automatically gives any school with previous CAMP experience more points than those without. I believe the reason we didn't get an award was likely due to limited federal funding in this area."

Qualifications for applicants were based on each state's per-pupil expenditure for education and the number of eligible migrant students, ages 3 to 21, residing within the state. Fanning said he knows at least 75 K-State students who would be eligible for the money.

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MIGRANT | Dept. of Education accepts only 8 of 36 applications

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According to a July 23 article in the Lawrence Journal-World, only eight of 36 grant applications received by universities were accepted.

The program serves about 2,400 CAMP participants annually and provides counseling, tutoring, skills work shops, health services and housing assistance. It also ensures that participants receive full and appropriate opportunities to meet the same state and student academic achievement standards that all children are expected to meet, according to the article.

KU benefited from the grant for five years until the U.S. Department of Education denied the university's grant request to continue the program in September 2006. As many as 24 students a year were provided tuition for six credit hours and $750 in living expenses per semester, according to the Lawrence Journal-World article.

Some Kansas residents question the denial of what could have been nearly state wide funding for the state's exploding migrant population in need of bilingual and multicultural instruction and career educational services.

"As an agricultural school, giving immigrants a chance to succeed would make K-State look good," Clay Cheney, Manhattan resident, said. "They need to make it work and give these kids a chance."