Too many students already left behind

From The Lawrence Journal-World

Are tuition premiums placed on some areas of study at Kansas University and other U.S. colleges pushing low-income students into majors with less career potential?

According to comments by KU Provost Richard Lariviere in a recent New York Times article, the answer to that question appears to be “yes.” ...

KU began charging “differential tuition” (now referred to on the KU Web site as “course fees”) in the early 1990s. The fees were justified as a way to insure students in certain majors have the up-to-date equipment and top-notch faculty necessary to succeed in their careers.

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Acquiring a well-paying job may be one goal of a university education, but universities shouldn’t be in the business of placing a relative dollar value on various fields of study.

It’s also unsettling for university officials to point to scholarship programs that are funded by the additional fees. That amounts to having students who pay full tuition and fees actually subsidizing the education of some of their classmates. ...

Too many students already are being left behind because of the rising costs of higher education.

There’s nothing wrong with being a history major, but it doesn’t serve the state of Kansas and its economic future to push people into liberal arts majors rather than encouraging those who are interested to pursue professional degrees.

If even anecdotal evidence that course fees are having that effect doesn’t worry KU officials, it should.
Don’t let buzz words scare you into poor health

Affordable health coverage is one of the most important issues facing Kansans.

This summer the Kansas Health Policy Authority has been touring the state to get input on the direction Kansas should take in regard to access to health care. I attended two of the meetings, one at Strother Field and the other at William Newton Hospital.

The KHPA listened to concerns and will use this information to formulate a plan by November, but the KHAP is still open to ideas.

A number of states — Massachusetts, California and Vermont specifically — have implemented some interesting ideas we could learn from. I have already heard these ideas called “communism” and “socialized medicine.” These labels are misleading, and it would be a shame if Kansans miss an opportunity simply because someone or group resorted to name calling.

Communism is an economic system in which the government owns everything. Socialized medicine is a system in which the hospitals are owned and managed by the government, and medical personnel are employees of the state. The programs in Massachusetts, California and Vermont are not even government insurance.

The hospitals, doctors and insurance policies are all still private. In these states, however, the government does help to pay for health insurance for those who are least able to pay, and they help streamline paperwork, but private companies provide the insurance.

Some of these states have created larger risk pools which should help small businesses and individuals by lowering premiums. They should save money by eliminating misuse of emergency rooms. In Massachusetts, the policy follows the worker if they change jobs. All of these ideas have merit and should be considered.

I am not advocating any of these proposals, but I feel we need to keep an open mind. I just hope Kansans will look at the issues and not just listen to the buzz!

Summer interim committees meet

Summer interim committees are meeting to formulate legislation for the 2008 session. These committees are working on the following topics: Assessment and taxation, energy and natural resources, federal and state affairs, financial institutions, judiciary and transportation.

Standing joint committees meet

Standing joint Senate-House committees will be meeting this summer and fall to review policies and to hold hearings for the 2008 session. These committees include:

• The Legislative Education Planning Commission.
• Joint Committee on Information Technology.
• Joint Committee Corrections and Juvenile Justice.
• Joint Committee on Rules and Regulations.
• State Employee Compensation Oversight Commission.
• 2010 Commission.

More legislative highlights

In my last newsletter, I listed some of the legislation that had passed and was signed into law. Here is an additional list of the laws that were passed during the 2007 legislative session.

• Support for Kansas to be the site for the $450 million National Bio and Agro Defense Facility. (Kansas is now one of the five finalist states.)
• Tax incentives for processes to capture carbon dioxide underground.
• Big game permits for any immediate family member living with a landowner.
• Registration of ammonium nitrate dealers and better record-keeping to reduce meth production.
• Star bonds for bio science development.
• Disaster relief for Kiowa County. (More disaster relief is planned for southeast Kansas.)
• Alexa’s Law which adds a sec-
ond murder count if an unborn child dies when its mother is murdered.

- Programs to help stop bullying in schools.
- Additional funds for building maintenance on state college campuses.
- Establishment of the Kansas Technical School Commission.
- Adoption of the Uniform Child Abduction Prevention Act.
- A policy to allow physical therapists to treat, in some cases, without prior approval from a physician.

**State universities to waive late payments for students affected by natural disasters**

In an effort to assist state university students from counties affected by the 2007 natural disasters, all six state universities will offer these students the option to defer tuition and fee payments which are normally due at the end of August.

They will also develop individual deferred payment plans for affected students. To qualify, students should contact the following offices at:

- **Emporia State University Student Financial Services**, (620) 341-5340
- **Fort Hays State University Student Fiscal Services**, (785) 628-5251
- **Kansas State University Student Financial Services**, (785) 532-6420
- **Pittsburg State University Cashiers & Student Accounts**, (620) 235-4163
- **University of Kansas University Bursar**, (785) 864-3322
- **Wichita State University Financial Operations**, (316) 978-3070

Counties from which students can apply are: Allen, Anderson, Bourbon, Butler, Chautauqua, Cherokee, Coffey, Cowley, Crawford, Elk, Franklin, Greenwood, Labette, Linn, Miami, Montgomery, Neosho, Osage, Wilson and Woodson.
WOMEN PHILANTHROPISTS HELP WITH LEADERSHIP, CAUSES

The Associated Press

LAWRENCE — An organization of women philanthropists who are interested in the University of Kansas has provided its members an opportunity to support important causes and expand their own interests.

The group, Women Philanthropists for KU, started four years ago as part of a national trend to get women philanthropically involved.

"It's not a program or a club," said the Endowment Association's Judy Wright, who leads a steering committee of the group. "It's an initiative. The point is to get women more involved through programming and to offer opportunities for leadership on campus."

Wright said that the group tries to consider the way women like to interact.

"We know that, generally, women like to get more involved with causes or programs they want to support," she said. "Men say, 'It sounds great; here's some money.' Women say, 'It sounds great; how can I be of service?'"

Deann Reece Tacha of Lawrence, a federal judge and one of the organization's two co-chairwomen, said women often look for causes that focus more on children's issues and on health care.

But Tacha and Wright added that women athletics and the sciences, generally popular with men, are also important causes for women philanthropists.

Generally, the group tries to hold programs every year that will connect women who are interested in the University of Kansas with others and the school. The group's Sept. 7 program will be a luncheon with Margaret May Damen, who leads a group that focuses on the creation of wealth by women.

Other programs have included introducing women to the Audio Reader program and visiting the new Lifespan Institute at the Kansas University Medical Center.

"I had women come up to me after the Audio Reader program and ask me how they didn't know it even existed," Wright said. "I suspect many of those women are still volunteering there today."

The group also runs a fund administered by the Emily Taylor Women's Resource Center that gives grants to female undergraduate seniors and graduate students to advance their careers, doing such things as paying for travel to an interview or buying a new suit.

"And that was driven by interest by our women," Wright said. "And it's not a fund we do fundraising for. It's funded entirely through this organization."

Wright said the 33 women on the advisory board, some with their spouses, have donated more than $6 million to the university since the program was founded.

More importantly, according to Tacha, the group has become a source of wonderful friendships.
COMMUNITY NEWS

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Astronaut training

The Kansas Cosmosphere and Space Center at Hutchinson graduated Alex Neises, son of Glenn and Connie Neises, from level 3 of its Future Astronaut Training Program this summer. The week-long camp is for students entering grades seven through 10. Developed by Cosmosphere staff, the program is intended to motivate campers to seek careers in space-related industries.

Level 3 campers spend two days at the Cosmosphere, then travel to Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas, for further training.

In Houston, campers tour Building 9, which houses NASA's space shuttle trainers and the International Space Station mock-up. Level 3 campers also tour the former and current mission control centers, the vacuum chamber and the Neutral Buoyancy Lab's 6.2-million-gallon pool, where astronauts train for work in microgravity.

Before going to Houston, campers train at the Cosmosphere in the 4-G Centrifuge and in the multi-axis trainer.

Receives degree

April Lagg of Emporia was awarded an associate of applied science in criminal justice degree from Kaplan University during the commencement ceremony Aug. 4.

Up the hill

Katherine Ann Moneymaker of Emporia participated in the annual Walk Up the Hill at the University of Kansas on Aug. 13. According to a news release, the walk signifies the beginning of a higher education journey for the 189 Mount Oread scholars whose ultimate goal is to walk down the hill upon graduation.

Moneymaker, a freshman, is studying pre-social welfare. She is a graduate of Emporia High School and is the daughter of Richard and Cynthia Moneymaker.
"You have to smell the chocolate mint," Diana Frederick urged as we walked through the Sensory Garden.

"I think it smells like those little Andes mints," she smiled. "To experience it, you have to touch it to activate the scent."

I rubbed a leaf between my fingers and sure enough, the chocolate fragrance cheered up my brain.

The Sensory Garden is a touchy-feely kind of place, located at the Audio-Reader building on the University of Kansas campus in Lawrence.

Audio-Reader is a reading service for the blind, visually impaired and print disabled. Over closed-circuit radio, volunteers read newspapers, magazines and books.

The garden was started in 1996, the inspiration of Diana Frederick, Audio-Reader's director of development. Many volunteers have helped her make it bloom.

What began as a tiny patch has grown into a wandering garden with a wheelchair-friendly brick path and a gazebo. Plants were selected for their tactile qualities or their fragrance.

Unusual shapes and textures drape over the retaining wall. There are succulents with tough skins and also lamb's ear, covered with soft, white fuzz. You'll also find peonies, rosemary, lavender and lemon balm.

Wind chimes catch the breeze and a raised bed makes it easy for those in wheelchairs to touch the plants, which are labeled in both English and Braille — an Eagle Scout project.

To me, this garden is just so symbolic of the caring spirit that hovers in the Audio-Reader building.

Audio-Reader employees expect a lot from themselves — and they give a lot.

The staff makes things easy for volunteers. Newspaper assignments are readied: articles are circled and pages are cut so there's less rattling of paper over the air. Recording studios are made comfortable and user-friendly. In the winter, a fireplace adds warmth and coziness to the Audio-Reader living room.

Jennifer Nigro, volunteer coordinator, knows her charge: "My job is all about the volunteers."

She has 350 of them to keep track of — and she loves her work. "I keep telling people, they'll have to haul my cold dead body out of my office because I'm going to stay until the day I die," Nigro said, laughing.

Together, the staff and volunteers focus on serving their listeners.

Can you imagine reading a dictionary into a microphone?

Me neither. But it's been done.

They've taken recipe cards that a woman could no longer read and made them into an audio book. A thick, diabetic cookbook has been recorded and archived.

I learned about Audio-Reader when I recorded my first commentary for Kansas Public Radio a few years ago. These two services share a building. And the generosity of the people on each side of that building fascinates me.

So I asked Janet Campbell about this. Campbell heads both services. In 1979, she started with Audio-Reader as a secretary. She's served as director since 1990. And, if that's not enough, she's been general manager of KPR for 11 years.

"What makes Audio-Reader such a vortex of kindness and service?" I asked.

"The entire staff supports and promotes our mission 100 percent," Campbell said. And that mission is "to promote independence to the blind and print-disabled by providing access to current news and information."

The dedication to service for individual staff members often began with a personal connection.

"Everyone knows someone who can use the service," Campbell said. "Everyone has a relative with diminished eyesight."
Her own mother was an Audio-Reader listener.

At Audio-Reader, they read to those who cannot read for themselves. And they've also taken a little time to stop and plant the roses.

For information about Audio-Reader's free services, call (800) 772-8898 or visit www.reader.ku.edu.

"Flyover People" is online at www.flyoverpeople.net.

* Cheryl Unruh can be reached at cheryl@flyoverpeople.net.
Tuition costs

Course premiums counterproductive.

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— The Lawrence Journal-World
Cattle drive to celebrate novel’s anniversary

LAWRENCE (AP) — It’s not quite the trek Robert Day envisioned for his novel, “The Last Cattle Drive.”

But given the way last year’s practice run went, that’s probably a good thing.

“We lost all the cattle and ran into a milo field,” Day said. “It became ‘The Lost Cattle Drive’ rather than The Last Cattle Drive.”

Day’s 1977 novel chronicles a modern-day drive from northwest Kansas to Kansas City, Kan. To commemorate the 30th anniversary of the book’s release, Day and a friend, O. Newton King, will re-enact a part of the fictional drive.

King, a retired pharmacy owner from Lawrence, has spent three years planning and organizing the drive, set for Sept. 4-5 at the Dickinson Ranch in Gorham, near Hays and Russell.

“His idea is almost as crazy as the idea of the book,” Day said. “It will sort of be a real chapter of the book — a condensed version.”

The drive also will raise money for 4-H clubs in Ellis and Russell counties, with 50 riders each day paying $300 each to go along.

“I wanted to leave something more permanent than cow pies,” King said.

Day, who teaches at Washington College in Chestertown, Md., was born in the Kansas City suburb of Shawnee, Kan. He graduated from the University of Kansas and taught there and at Fort Hays State University.

He worked on the Ward Sullivan Ranch northwest of Gorham and drew on his own experiences there to create the humorous novel’s main character, Spangler Star Turkle.

Kansas Chancellor Robert Hemenway, who has taught the novel in an honors seminar, said students can relate to the book because it appeals to their imaginations.

“We have such a rich history in Kansas,” he said. “I think it’s fun for students to imagine themselves as residents in the 20th century and imagine experiences of their forefathers.”

Besides the novel’s humor, Hemenway said, Day “evokes so many questions that students can ask, such as ‘What happened to the West?’; ‘What happened to the cowboy?’; and ‘Have we lost some of the values we associated with stalwart settlers?’”
Troy Dierking may be next 30th judicial district judge

Troy A. Dierking of Caldwell, Kansas, was one of two attorneys selected on August 16, 2007 by the 30th Judicial District Nominating Commission for the nomination to be sent to Governor Kathleen Sebelius for possible appointment as District Judge for the 30th Judicial District. The 30th Judicial District of Kansas includes Sumner County, Harper county, Pratt County, Barber County and Kingman County. The appointment is expected to occur on or before September 16, 2007.

Dierking is a 1985 graduate of White City High School and graduated from the University of Kansas School of Law in 1992. Since 1993, he has been a general practitioner in Sumner County, Kansas, currently with offices both in Caldwell and Wellington.

Troy resides in Caldwell with his wife Anne and two sons, Cole and Connor. He is the son of Gary R. Dierking and the late Marilyn K. Church.
Recruiters attract new grads with one-on-one interaction

BY MORGAN CHILSON | CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Talented graduates from area colleges and universities are romanced by businesses actively luring the best and the brightest to the local work force.

Although career services personnel at local educational institutions don’t track the ultimate destinations of their graduates, most say they think Kansas City fares well in a competitive marketplace.

If anything, said Mike Theobald, director of career services for Rockhurst University, students may pack up and leave for a larger city for a few years, but they seem to come back.

“A lot of students who are raised in the area go to school in the area, and they want to stay,” he said.

Layne Prenger, director of career development at Park University, agreed that many students launch their careers in Kansas City because family is nearby.

“Overall, I would say we retain a lot of them because we have that Midwest mentality, and we like to be close to our families and our friends,” she said.

Although family may be an underlying motivator, Kansas City business employment recruiters are doing their best to entice these grads with job offers that meet their career needs.

Missy Ragsdale, human resources manager at HOK Sport Venue Event in Kansas City, said most of the firm’s architects are graduates of Kansas State University and the University of Kansas. HOK keeps its name in front of students at those two schools by offering a full scholarship that includes tuition, books, room and board, and a semester of study abroad each year to one student.

The challenge for HOK is not necessarily attracting architects to its business — because many think it’s a pretty cool job to build sports venues, Ragsdale said — but to fight the dearth of architects in the marketplace nationwide.

The battle for talent is helped by the business atmosphere at HOK, she said, because it’s fun and energetic. That’s an excellent recruitment tool.

“Our market requires talented, energetic, intellectual people,” Ragsdale said. “Our environment lends itself to that type of personality. There are vibrant colors throughout, employee artwork is displayed throughout. There’s a nacho machine, a slushie machine, hot dogs every day.”

As a recruitment draw for today’s young professional, it could be hard to beat a nacho machine — one recruiter joked that she follows the principle of “feed them, and they will come.” But many recruiters stressed that personal contact is their best tool.

Nothing outstrips individual interaction in the recruitment process, they said. Business recruiters spend their time at career fairs, informal on-campus meetings and on the telephone.

“We’ve seen an increase in numbers of employers doing on-campus interviews,” said David Gaston, director of KU’s University Career Center. “Even if you don’t have a lot of opportunities or positions coming up, it’s always a good thing to stay on campus and keep that name recognition up.”

Nationally, Enterprise Rent-A-Car hires an average of 8,000 graduates each year. That adds up to aggressive recruiting, and Lisa Martini, spokeswoman at the Kansas City Enterprise office, knows what has worked locally.

“I think most of our success has been the things that we’ve done on college campuses,” she said, adding that sometimes it isn’t overt recruitment but steps that are taken to keep the Enterprise name on campus.

College alums who work at Enterprise establish relationships with their colleges, becoming involved in special interest groups and going back to talk about Enterprise. Sales, marketing and even accounting executives visit campuses to talk about their jobs and the Enterprise model.

Prenger at Park University said campus visibility takes many forms, from
Prenger

Enterprise recently sponsored a bowling tournament at KU and also a “get green” room at a career fair. “Get green” was in reference to the production industry green room and allowed students a place to freshen up before going into the fair.

“We provided things like lint brushes, mints, tissues. We had mirrors; we had combs so people could straighten up before they went in,” Martini said. “It gave us an opportunity to meet a lot of people.”

Although there are many anecdotal stories nationwide about using video feeds, blogging and other tech measures to attract new employees, Kansas City-area recruiters said those techniques won’t replace one-on-one interaction.

But that doesn’t mean they won’t use them in the future for initial contacts.

Martini said she had been frustrated because college students weren’t returning her phone calls. A newly hired graduate suggested using text messages, and it’s been very successful, she said.

“They respond a lot more,” she said, “probably 80 percent of the time.”

Nationally, Enterprise has taken a look at blogging and other tech options but has not implemented any of those recruitment techniques, Martini said.

Morgan Chilson | Chilson is a freelance writer in the Kansas City area.
Rock Chalk Roadshow to visit Lebo, Lyndon schools

Kansas University staff will meet with counselors, parents and students Friday, at Lebo and Lyndon High Schools.

For the fifth year, KU staff will take the "Rock Chalk Roadshow" to high schools and community colleges in Kansas. Students who attend may enter a drawing to win prizes such as a $250 textbook certificate when he/she enrolls at KU, free registration for a campus visit, KU football tickets and KU gear.