Getting red marks for green efforts

Some universities aren't ranked very high in terms of steps toward Earth-friendly policies.

By KAREN DILLON
The Kansas City Star

Paper towels made from recycled materials have become part of the battle against global warming, and that's what you'll find if you visit a restroom at Park University.

"This is really significant because we are saving trees, water and energy," said David Fox, a geology teacher who is head- ing up the university's climate protection campaign.

Park University believes that it's leading Kansas City-area colleges in its quest to help protect the earth.

Meanwhile, the region's largest universities — the University of Kansas, the University of Missouri system and Kansas State University — received only average to low marks on the national 2008 College Sustainability Report Card. The report looks at colleges and universities with the 200 largest endowment funds in the United States and Canada.

But on the KU campus, a whirlwind of change has occurred since the survey was done last spring, said Lynn Bretz, KU communications director.

"The (report card) is a worthy exercise," Bretz said. "But if they were on our campus today, there is a lot of activity going on."

University of Missouri and K-State officials involved with sustainability did not return phone calls.

Park University's campaign kicked off last year when school President Beverley Byers-Pevitts and 300 other university presidents signed the American College & University Presidents Climate Commitment to reduce global warming. The heads of KU, the University of Missouri system and K-State did not sign.

Park University's campaign calls for the school to become carbon neutral.

"We are tentatively looking at 2020," said Rita Weighill, a university spokeswoman.

To reach that goal, the university has begun to implement a number of changes, including a plan that requires the school to finish the inventory within a year. Within two years, an action plan will designate how to include climate protection goals in the curriculum.

The university also has begun to implement simple actions that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions, such as replacing paper towels with those made from recycled materials.

Such activities:

- Implementing a green building construction policy that follows high national standards.
- Implementing a policy that requires purchasing only appliances that are Energy Star certified.
- Adopting at least three recycling measures to reduce waste.
- The College Sustainability Report Card, which is designed to identify the leading green colleges with the largest endowments, was released recently.
- The University of Missouri and its campuses received a C, KU received a C- and K-State received a D+.

The report said:

- The University of Missouri system has no known sustainability policies. However, the Columbia campus has a number of active student groups and each of the campuses is beginning to implement energy-saving actions. The Kansas City campus plans to replace about 46,000 low-efficiency lamps.

In April, Kansas City students rejected a proposal to raise student fees to build an environmentally friendly student union. But administrators have promised they would encourage student leaders to put the referendum to another vote.

At KU, Bretz said the college has begun a new effort by establishing a Center for Sustainability. At the center, faculty and students are creating a network of activities to mitigate the college's environmental impact.

Bretz said that since the survey was done, the school has adopted a higher green-building standard, purchased 28 new environmentally clean buses and implemented a park-and-ride system with free passes for faculty and staff.

Faculty also are contributing to teaching sustainability and teaching.

Bretz said the KU chancellor did not sign the American College & University Presidents Climate Commitment to reduce global warming because he believes there are other ways the university will make significant contributions to sustainability.

KU did play a major part recently in the nation's largest ever "teach-in," which focused on global warming. More than 1,500 universities took part, including Park University.

K-State has not committed to reducing its emissions, and has not explored renewable energy options, according to the report. But all new construction must meet energy-conservation guidelines.

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LAWRENCE—Mark Austin Harries, Vassar, son of Tom and Diane Harries, has been selected as a member of the University of Kansas Concert Choir that will perform for the upcoming Southwest Division of the American Choral Directors Association convention, in Kansas City.

KU's Concert Choir performance will be at 2:30 p.m. Feb. 22, in Folly Theater, Kansas City, in the program titled "There is a Spirit.

Out of all the association's university choirs, the KU Concert Choir was selected for the final performance.
TOPEKA, Kan. (AP)--It will cost more to go to college in Kansas next year, but the size of the increase will depend on the specific institution.

The Kansas Board of Regents voted Wednesday to let the state's public universities, community colleges and technical schools set their own tuition rates. But regents also strongly suggested that any increase be no more than 6 percent.

The state's six public universities have instituted double-digit percentage tuition increases in the last five years. Since 2002, increases have ranged from 42.2 percent at Fort Hays State to 136 percent at the University of Kansas.

Presidents of all six of the universities told the regents their tuition increases would be under 6 percent next year.
Students from nine Kansas high schools in Nemaha and Jackson counties will be honored Feb. 18 by the University of Kansas Alumni Association and KU Endowment.

A total of 38 seniors will be recognized for their academic achievements and named Kansas Honor Scholars at a 6:30 p.m. dinner program at the First United Methodist Church, Holton.

Honorees will include:
- B&B High School — Brent Bergman, Michelle Bergman, Troy Lierz.
- Bern High School — Bryson Haverkamp.
- Centralia High School — Katie Crowther, Derek Rempe.

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.

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

Lynn Bretz, director of University Communications, will speak to the students, parents and guests.
The University of Kansas debate team currently ranks number one overall in the National Debate Tournament varsity debate.

Team members include Christopher Stone of Derby and Brett Bricker, Ronnie Press, Joel Kasten, Dylan Quigley and Mathew Peterson, all of Wichita.
Coal plant bills play politics with the law

By Karl Brooks

Imagine a Kansas where Texans, financed by Wall Street investment banks, ignored state hazardous waste disposal rules while incinerating medical waste. Confident their Topeka lobbyists could work a bill through the Legislature any time the rules impeded their business, the fast-buck polluters happily opened new incinerators from Goodland to Garnett.

Imagine a Kansas where citizens aggrieved by medical-waste pollution sued the incinerators, and a judge and jury ruled the facts and law entitled them to compensation for impaired health and devalued property. Confident their statehouse friends understood the price of loyalty, the polluters simply got the Legislature to pass a bill overturning the court's decision.

Legislative politics today make this imagined Kansas too close for comfort.

Bills now in the Legislature give Sunflower Power Co. a permit to pollute Kansas air. One company, throwing around money and clout to get its own way, unbalances our legal system by encouraging other powerful interests to play politics with law.

The current fracas in Topeka is about Sunflower's proposed coal-burning plants. But if this company gets what it wants, political influence could menace all Kansans' constitutional rights.

Kansans have long relied on a balanced legal system of statute laws, administrative rules and judicial decisions. What lawyers call "administrative law" safeguards our health, conserves our natural resources and educates our children.

A quick look at administrative law shows why Sunflower's bid to throw its political weight around by rewriting agency rules and cutting out the courts sets a bad example for the future.

All three co-equal branches of government, working together, make administrative law. Kansas' Constitution empowers elected legislators to make broad policy decisions by enacting statutes. Elected governors then appoint expert administrators to enforce those laws by making rules. Kansas' Constitution empowers independent judges to decide disputes about the statutes and rules.

Sunflower's special-interest bills erode this well-settled bipartisan balance by giving one branch of government — the Legislature — more authority.

Sunflower's coal plant bills would interfere with the orderly enforcement of the Air Quality Act by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment and the attorney general.

Sunflower's bills would interfere with the impartial administration of justice by short-circuiting numerous court cases testing KDHE's interpretation of the federal Clean Air Act.

Sunflower's bills would upset the balance of constitutional power. They would replace precedent with politics. Making the Legislature supreme over the executive branch and the courts encourages future polluters to buy their way past inconvenient laws, enforced by expert civil servants and interpreted by thoughtful judges.

Karl Brooks teaches history and law at the University of Kansas.
The World’s Best Engineers

By Richard Cybulski
Director of Recruiting
HNTB Companies

Our nation is growing, and our infrastructure must grow to keep up with it—not only to conduct the business of our daily lives but also for the ongoing safety of our citizens. Civil engineers play an integral role in determining the direction this growth will take. Yet we’re not doing enough to ensure there are enough qualified professionals ready to answer the call.

According to the Urban Land Institute, the recent growth and activity in downtown Kansas City has elevated the need for more mixed-use development. Metropolitan Kansas City averaged 6.5 percent growth in hotel room demand in 2007, and proposed developments for 2008 include restaurants, retail stores, and 3,400 hotel rooms. At that rate it’s clear we’ll need additional infrastructure to support this growth—especially roads and transit systems—just to keep people and commerce moving efficiently. This means a demand for more civil engineers—highly trained individuals who design and supervise the construction of roads, bridges, tunnels, airports, buildings, transit systems, and water and sewage systems.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, by 2014 the number of civil engineers needed to support infrastructure growth will rise by approximately 20 percent, not including open positions due to corporate growth or the retirement of baby boomers.

A decade ago, engineering firms could choose from an abundance of candidates. Filling positions was relatively easy. Now, the tables have turned. While there are more than 1.5 million engineers currently working in the United States, only 18 percent are civil engineers. There are simply not enough qualified candidates to go around, and candidates have the luxury of being selective about where they choose to work.

Not only are firms seeking more civil engineering candidates, they’re also searching for diversity. Currently, only 10 percent of civil engineers are women and 20 percent are minorities. Colleges are beginning to attract more students from these diverse groups; however, challenges remain.

The growing competition for top engineering talent has created the need for unique recruiting approaches. It isn’t sufficient to place an ad or attend a career fair. Human resource professionals must think outside the box to remain a step ahead. At HNTB Corporation, we always are looking for ways to be original and engage bold yet unique strategies to attract the best people.

HNTB focuses on growing the leaders of tomorrow at the grassroots level. One approach is to establish strong lasting relationships with area colleges, such as Kansas State University, Kansas University, and the University of Missouri-Kansas City, where we’ve hired many of these schools’ brightest students. However, it is critical to remember that strong relationships are built on trust and integrity. Good college relations programs include employee board appointments; in-class employer presentations; lectures at school events; serving on employer forums to help design engineering curriculum; forging strong relationships with faculty, academic advisors, and college deans; and mentoring young engineering students. Firms are finding it harder to keep employees as well as attract them. In addition to hiring top talent, firms must recognize that employees need to grow personally and professionally to be happy. It is critical that they are mentored, coached, and developed to assume positions of greater responsibility. Firms need to offer a comprehensive benefit package, flexible work schedules, fun work environments, the latest technology tools and the opportunity to work on exciting and challenging projects, as well as providing competitive salaries. Firms offering “the total package” will be more successful at attracting and retaining employees.

It’s refreshing when professionals can find an organization that offers them not only a career, but one they can enjoy. With a high number of single-parent and dual-income families these days, many employees look for companies that are close to home or offer flexible work schedules to provide an acceptable balance between family and career. Others choose a firm for the type of work it does.

In the end, people who choose careers in civil engineering can leave a legacy that will serve generations of Americans. Collectively we must do more to attract new professionals to this worthwhile industry and retain those who have already chosen to serve.
College tuition increases in Kansas left to schools

**But the regents also strongly suggested that institutions limit any increases to 6 percent.**

By MARÁ ROSE WILLIAMS
The Kansas City Star

TOPEKA | Kansas college students will pay more for their education next year, but the increase probably won’t be more than 6 percent.

For three hours Wednesday, the Kansas Board of Regents discussed whether to raise tuition and by how much. In the end the regents decided against a freeze at current rates or a definitive cap on how much schools could raise tuition.

Regents voted 7-2 to let the leaders of the state’s six public universities, its community colleges and its technical schools come up with individual plans for tuition increases. But regents also strongly suggested that none of the institutions propose an increase of more than 6 percent.

Christine Downey-Schmidt, board chairwoman, said she was opposed to a tuition cap because she wants to maintain the flexibility that university presidents have to set rates according to needs.

Regents Donna Shank of Liberal and Gary Sherrer of Overland Park voted against the plan.

During Wednesday’s discussion, Shank and Sherrer had said they favored a 5-percent limit this year.

“I’m just saying — this year, in this economy, can’t we take a break and show some restraint?” Shank asked.

Regent universities have seen some double-digit percentage increases in the last five years. Since 2002, tuition increases have ranged from 42.2 percent at Fort Hayes State to 136 percent at the University of Kansas.

Student leaders who spoke at the meeting said they had been involved in setting tuition at their schools, and they don’t want lower tuition if it affects the quality of their education.

“We don’t want the increases to be outrageous,” said Courtney George, student body president at Emporia State University, “but we want our diploma to mean something. What matters most is how the money is being spent.”

University leaders said they have been working with student leaders to come up with tuition plans that in most cases would keep increases to about 6 percent.

Kansas State University President Jon Wefald said the average tuition increase there would be about 4.4 percent.

University of Kansas Chancellor Robert Hemenway said KU’s tuition increase “will come in under 6 percent.”

Each of the other university presidents said their increases would fall below 6 percent.

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For superdelegates, the heat is on

Some are for Clinton. Others back Obama. For the undeclared, pressure rises as the primaries near an end.

By DAVE HELLING
The Kansas City Star

Almost 800 Democratic superdelegates are squirming.
They know the math: Sen. Hillary Clinton has to win 86 percent of the remaining regular, pledged delegates, starting next week in Wisconsin and Hawaii, to take the nomination outright — without any superdelegate votes.

Ditto for Sen. Barack Obama: He would need 80 percent of the estimated 1,237 regular delegates left.

No one expects either candidate to meet those targets; instead, superdelegates will now almost certainly pick the Democratic nominee.

Go to KansasCity.com for continuous campaign updates and analysis from Prime Buzz.

Also vote on who you think should be John McCain's running mate.

But how? By making an independent decision, based on seasoned judgment? Or by ratifying the voters' choice?

Let's ask Missouri Rep. Maria Chappelle-Nadal, an undeclared superdelegate from the St. Louis area.

"The people of this country should decide," she said.

So, you'll support the party's leader in popular votes when the primaries are over?

Not necessarily.
SUPER: More than 450 undeclared

FROM A1

"I have my favorites," she said. "Hillary looked great after New Hampshire. After the Bill Clinton fiasco in South Carolina, I was peeved. ... I'm going back and forth."

So is Rep. John Lewis of Georgia. An important Clinton superdelegate, he reportedly said Thursday he would switch to Obama.

On Friday, a spokeswoman said Lewis had not made a final decision — only that switching from her to him is "on the table."

More than 450 undeclared superdelegates across the country are facing the same issue as Chappelle-Nadal and Lewis, as well as daily phone calls and friendly advice.

They know some voters will be furious if they give the nomination to a candidate who is behind in regular votes when the primaries and caucuses end. But they also ask: Why have superdelegates at all if they simply ratify voters' decisions?

"Superdelegates have been chosen by a democratic process," said John Temporiti, Missouri party chairman and an undeclared superdelegate. "The most important thing is that we (choose) a Democrat who can win in November."

Which makes Clinton backers smile — it's the same argument they are making.

"Superdelegates are supposed to vote their conscience and supposed to vote for the person they think would make the best candidate," Clinton spokesman Howard Wolfson said this week.

But others, including some in the Obama campaign, suggested a serious defection of superdelegates to the second-place candidate could cripple the nominee and the party.

"If there's a perception among voters that insiders decided ... I think our party will suffer," party strategist Tad Devine told PBS.

"Superdelegates are going to be very sensitive to who's ahead," said University of Kansas political science professor Burdett Loomis. "The idea that party bosses could decide the nomination, instead of the voters, could really hurt the party."

Superdelegates may be even more sensitive to charges of unfairly deciding the nomination because of who they are.

The Politico Web site reported Friday that nearly half of all superdelegates are white men — while only 28 percent of Democratic voters fit that description.

"I'm not surprised that there are still a lot of men," Rep. Louise McIntosh Slaughter of

have open spots for superdelegates who must be picked. Missouri will choose two more this spring; Kansas, one more. State party officials do the picking, but candidates may not be required to disclose their choice.

Because superdelegates can always change their votes anyway, the question may remain in doubt until August.

"Is it probable that we'll have a brokered convention? No," Temporiti said.

"Is it possible? Yes."

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SUPERDELEGATES

MISSOURI

Obama

Clinton
Rep. Emanuel Cleaver, Richard Gephardt, Sandy Querry, Doug Brooks

Undeclared
Rep. Ike Skelton, John Temporiti, Robin Carnahan, Maria Chappelle-Nadal, Yolanda Wheat, Leila Medley (two to be picked)

KANSAS

Obama
Gov. Kathleen Sebelius, Randy Roy, Lee Kinch

Clinton
Teresa Krusor

Undeclared

New York told the Web site. "We still have a ways to go."

The tangles of gender and racial politics and the superdelegate process deeply concern some Democrats.

That may explain why some undeclared superdelegates said they would remain that way for the foreseeable future.

There are six undeclared superdelegates in Missouri, four in Kansas. All 10 said this week that they would not make up their minds anytime soon, despite pleading calls from campaigns.

The undeclared superdelegate picture is made more confusing because many states...
Illinois campuses shooting prompts review of security plans

Area universities are continuing to beef up emergency response systems and training.

By MARÁ ROSE WILLIAMS and SARA SHEPHERD
The Kansas City Star

Thursday's shooting on the Northern Illinois University campus serves as a reminder that security plans need to be evaluated and updated constantly, area police and university officials said.

"You should never get comfortable with any plan," said Maj. Jim Simpson of the Liberty Police Department, which has worked with William Jewel College to improve safety and campus security. "You need to look at it and see if you need to make any changes."

Last year's shootings at Virginia Tech led colleges and universities to take steps to beef up campus security.

Last spring, Missouri Gov. Matt Blunt called together a campus security task force. It concluded that the state's campuses should have regularly-reviewed emergency response plans, do a better job training faculty and first responders, and improve coordination between colleges, local police and fire departments.

On Thursday, officials in both Missouri and Kansas gave an update on the progress of those plans and others to improve campus security.

Missouri State University: Members of a Kansas City security company will comb the grounds and buildings of the campus in Springfield over the next few weeks and point out dangerous spots on campus and suggest ways to correct them.

After Virginia Tech, Missouri State established an emergency response task force made up of faculty, staff and students to review and update the campus emergency response plan. This semester the university also began a training program to teach everyone how to identify and react to potential dangers on campus.

And the campus is installing a three-tiered mass notification system that would simultaneously send e-mails, text messages and call students and faculty to warn them in the event of danger. It's the same system the four campuses in the University of Missouri system began using this fall.

"Our conclusion is that we have a safe campus, but campus environments are open," said Ken McClure, associate vice president for administrative services at Missouri State. "There are a lot of opportunities for danger, so you have to minimize the dangers as much as possible."

William Jewell College: In July, the Liberty Police Department's tactical response team conducted a training exercise on campus. The simulation was used for training officers to disable a shooter and secure a building full of bystanders and victims.

University of Central Missouri: This fall the Warrensburg university initiated a mass text-messaging system. So far, 3,300 of the 12,500 students and faculty on campus have signed up for the service. University spokesman Jeff Murphy said school officials are considering whether to invest in a campus-wide alarm system similar to tornado warning sirens.

University of Kansas: Following the Virginia Tech shootings, KU developed a "multi-level" emergency response plan to blanket the nearly 1,000-acre Lawrence campus, said Todd Cohen, director of university relations.

In January, KU created an emergency management planning position and hosted a national group to lead a three-day training course for campus public safety officers and officers from other area universities.

For student notification, Cohen said, KU has implemented a text-message alert system that also covers students and staff at the KU Edwards Campus in Overland Park and at the University of Kansas Medical Center in Kansas City, Kan.; an e-mail system for students and staff; an indoor intercom system; and "cardlocks" at residence and scholarship halls, where students must swipe their identification cards to get inside.

Johnson County Community College: The Overland Park school has ordered bullet-proof vests for its safety officers, as well as batons and pepper spray for certified officers, said Wayne Brown, executive vice president for administration. He said the college is considering whether officers should carry firearms.

Students may be notified of an emergency via a text-messaging system, on flat-screen monitors around campus and on loudspeakers throughout buildings. Brown said the college has requested proposals for implementing an intercom system and hopes to install it after the budget is approved this summer.

The Star's Glenn Rice also contributed to this report.

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