LAWRENCE | Astronaut headed to KU

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| David Klepper, dklepper@kcstar.com

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The traditional way of making new drugs is about to be turned completely upside down. At least that's how Randy Scott sees it.

"We are headed for a very disruptive sort of time in the industry," said Scott, a California biotechnology chief executive who began his career in Kansas. New technology and science are "driving in precisely the opposite direction that the pharmaceutical industry has gone."

The much-heralded Human Genome Project at times also has been much-hyped, at least in terms of expectations about how quickly it would produce benefits for patients. Increasingly, though, genomic research and related work are triggering scientific advances responsible for the trend Scott described.

Developing a new drug is pricey, time-consuming and risky. Under intense profit pressures, pharmaceutical producers have been inclined to pursue new drugs that can serve the largest number of patients. These so-called blockbuster drugs can serve patients by the millions and produce sales measured by the billions. This helps persuade pharmaceutical executives that it is worth taking the risk of devoting hundreds of millions of dollars and often more than a decade of work to a single project.

As scientists have unraveled mysteries hidden among twisted strands of DNA, however, a one-drug-fits-all approach appears to be bad business. For one, new blockbusters are proving to be exceptionally elusive these days. Also, heightened understanding about differences in individuals and even differences in individual diseases are raising more doubts about the merits of developing a single drug to treat a mass market of patients.

"Biology is where it's going to be for the next 30 or 40 years," says Randy Scott.

Scott received a bachelor's degree from Emporia State University and a doctorate in biochemistry from the University of Kansas. He has worked at a series of biotech ventures and recently returned to describe his travels through the industry in hopes of inspiring a new generation of business and biology students now studying at KU.

Opportunities are vast for those who can transform scientific advances into breakthroughs reaching a patient's bedside, Scott said. "Biology is where it's going to be for the next 30 or 40 years," Scott said.

Cancer treatment offers a compelling illustration of how the one-drug-for-all approach is failing individual patients and broader society, Scott said. "In total, cancer drugs work about 25 percent of the time."

With a common form of breast cancer, surgery, radiation and hormonal therapy produce very successful long-term survival results, Scott said. Chemotherapy only improves the results for a tiny percentage of patients who have some of the most aggressive tumors, he said. Yet chemotherapy is administered to a vast majority of patients anyway, Scott said.

The problem for doctors and patients, Scott said, has been the lack of a reliable way to determine which tumors are likely to respond. Scott's company has developed a genetic test that identifies the tumors that should be treated with chemotherapy.

Many more patients could be spared the debilitating effects of chemotherapy treatments unlikely to produce substantial medical benefits, Scott said. Avoiding treatments that can cost $30,000 over a year also could allow the health-care system to save hundreds of millions of dollars.

Shifting the primary emphasis away from therapeutic drugs increasingly toward advanced diagnostic tests will increase the chances that more patients will receive the right drug at the right time, Scott said. "These are powerful new tools that are starting to sweep into practice," Scott said. "It is having an impact on how drugs are being prescribed."

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ROCKET MAN RETURNS: The Senate honored a former astronaut who is returning to Kansas to teach at the University of Kansas.

He is Steve Hawley, of Salina, who logged more than a month in space in space shuttle missions in 1986, 1990, 1997 and 1999. He now oversees planetary and space science research for NASA.

University of Kansas Chancellor Robert Hemenway announced Hawley will join the faculty of the department of physics and astronomy in the fall. Hemenway said Hawley also will promote math and science education.

The two men visited the Statehouse and sat on the Senate floor, where Sen. Pete Brungardt, a Salina Republican, praised Hawley's career.
Lawrence Journal-World on vote-getting strategies:

Interesting, isn't it, what some individuals or companies will do to try to win the votes of state legislators or the general citizenry?

Two cases in the last week are perfect examples.

Officials of Sunflower Electric Power Corp., the company that wants to build two coal-fired electrical plants near Holcomb, said they would give $2.5 million to Kansas State University if permits for the plants were approved by June 1.

The offer was revealed to members of the Kansas House just before a vote on legislation to allow construction of the plants.

It will be interesting to watch the final vote and any effort to override an expected veto by Gov. Kathleen Sebelius. Some consider Sunflower's offer almost as a bribe.

The other example is the offer by the Hall Family Foundation to purchase several buildings in Johnson County, one of which would be used for University of Kansas cancer research program, if Johnson County residents approve an eighth-cent sales tax later this year.

The campaign or scheme to get a favorable vote has been in the works for some time, with the Hall Family Foundation offer being the latest piece of the strategy.

Time will tell, but regardless, it is interesting to see what individuals and companies will do to try to get what they or their leaders want.

This type of vote-getting is likely to happen with greater frequency in the coming months and years, with the average voter probably wondering whether his or her single vote is going to mean much in the face of such powerful, well-organized and well-orchestrated campaigns.

The Hall family and Hall Family Foundation has been extremely generous to KU for many years, but this is the first time foundation officials have used the possible acquisition of a building as a tool or bait to get voters to approve a tax hike.

KU Chancellor Robert Hemenway is a member of the foundation board.

Politics is a funny, sometimes dirty, raw business.
Christopher De La Cruz, of Coffeyville and a student at the University of Kansas, Lawrence, has won the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarships for study abroad during the spring 2008 term.

De La Cruz, a senior, won the scholarship to study African culture at the University of Cape Town in South Africa. He is majoring in humanities and western civilization and African and African-American studies. He is the son of Donna and Juan De La Cruz.

De La Cruz has an associate's degree from Coffeyville Community College and is a Field Kindley Memorial High School graduate.

Sponsored by the United States Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, the congressionally funded program is highly competitive and administered by the Institute of International Education.

The Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program provides about 820 awards of up to $5,000 for U.S. undergraduate students to pursue semester- or year-long study abroad opportunities.
Tidwell to speak in Washington

LAWRENCE — John Edgar Tidwell, associate professor of English at the University of Kansas, will speak at the New Deal Gathering March 13 and 14 at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.

Sponsored by the American Folklife Center, the public symposium is titled "Art, Culture and Government: The New Deal at 75" and refocuses attention on the New Deal, the multifaceted social, cultural and fiscal recovery programs launched in 1933 to reform and reinvigorate national life in the wake of the Great Depression.

On March 14, Tidwell will speak on "Negro Fictions, Fictitious Negroes and Sterling A. Brown's Quest for Authenticity on the Federal Writers' Project" during a panel discussion titled "The New Deal Legacy and Contemporary Scholarship."

Last year, Tidwell published "A Negro Looks at the South by Sterling A. Brown" written with Mark Sanders of Emory University. Tidwell recently completed a second book on Brown with Steven Tracy of the University of Massachusetts-Amherst entitled "After Winter: Selected Writings on the Art and Life of Sterling A. Brown."

Tidwell has written extensively about other writers who were Brown's contemporaries. He has received many awards for research, scholarship and teaching and they include fellowships from the National Endowment for Humanities and the American Council of Learned Societies.

Before joining KU's Department of English in 1999, Tidwell taught at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, St. Olaf College in Minnesota, and the University of Kentucky-Lexington. In 1994, he was the Langston Hughes visiting professor at KU. He earned a doctorate from the University of Minnesota, a master's degree from Creighton University in Omaha, Neb., and a bachelor's degree from Washburn University in Topeka.

He is the son of Verlean Tidwell of Independence.
Astronaut to announce today he will join KU faculty

By DAVID CLOUSTON
Salina Journal

University of Kansas students who are interested in space could have no better guide than astronaut, NASA executive and former Salinian Steve Hawley, in college chancellor Robert Hemenway's opinion.

"He's widely known in the space community. There's no question that the university will benefit from that, and so will students," Hemenway said Tuesday.

Hemenway and Hawley are scheduled to visit Salina Central High School this morning for a 9:30 announcement that Hawley plans to leave his post with NASA in Houston to join the faculty at KU this fall. His mission will be to teach and to travel Kansas, promoting education and careers in science and math.

The Salina visit is one of four press stops publicizing the announcement. Hawley graduated from then Salina High School (now Central) in 1969. The pair also is scheduled to visit the Kansas Cosmosphere and Space Center in Hutchinson; the Statehouse in Topeka; and the Dole Institute of Politics on KU's Lawrence campus.

After high school, Hawley graduated from the University of Kansas in 1973 with degrees in physics and astronomy.

He was chosen by NASA to become an astronaut mission specialist in 1978. He became the third Kansan — all KU graduates — to fly in space. His first space shuttle experience in 1984 was the maiden flight of the shuttle Discovery.

He is a veteran of multiple space missions involving the release and repair of major satellites, including the Hubble Space Telescope, and is in the Astronaut Hall of Fame and Central's Mustang Hall of Fame.

Hawley said in a press release from the university that his new role at KU fulfills a longtime desire to return to Kansas, adding that the mission of promoting interest in science is a perfect fit.

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From 2001 to 2002, Hawley was director of flight crew operations at NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston. He currently directs astromaterials research and exploration science at NASA. In that role, Hawley oversees research in planetary and space science, and is responsible for NASA's collection of astromaterials, including the moon rocks, comet dust, Martian meteorites and solar wind particles.

In 1992, Hawley was named Kansan of the Year. "In the last two or three years, Steve and I talked about doing something like this," Hemenway said. "I think Steve has wanted to come back to the university and be in the classroom as a teacher and help us build an effective program to train science and math teachers. "He brings you so much talent in so many different areas," the chancellor said. "You always want to hire real superstars as faculty, and clearly, we've been able to do that."

Reporter David Clouston can be reached at 822-1403 or by e-mail at dclouston@salina.com.
Hawley makes us proud

Former astronaut returns to Salina to announce his plans

It's great watching our hometown kids when they go out into the world and succeed, especially when they reach heights where they reflect positively on our state and community.

When our Kansas kin do well, others rightly assume their hometowns helped make them what they are today. They have roots in places with foundations based on good work ethics, honesty and common sense.

That describes Salina, evidenced in the great people who have exercised these good qualities and moved from our community to the national and world stage.

Take Steve Hawley, for example. After graduating from Salina High School in 1969, he went on to receive degrees in physics and astronomy from the University of Kansas. He earned a doctorate in astronomy and astrophysics from the University of California.

His biography on the NASA Web site reports that he then entered the field of research, focusing on “spectrophotometry of gaseous nebulae and emission-line galaxies.”

It’s no wonder NASA selected him for its astronaut program. He joined the agency in 1978, launching a career that took him to space five times, where he logged more than 770 hours on space shuttles Discovery and Columbia.

Today, he is returning to Salina to announce his departure from NASA and his move to the faculty of the University of Kansas, where he will teach and promote education in science and math.

He is scheduled to appear at Salina Central High School with KU Chancellor Robert Hemenway this morning to make the announcement. Three other stops are planned, including the Kansas Cosmosphere in Hutchinson, the Statehouse in Topeka and the Dole Institute of Politics on KU’s Lawrence campus.

Today, we couldn’t be more proud of Salina.
our schools and KU. Hawley’s return to Kansas means students will have a chance to learn directly from a renowned space explorer and scientist.

Welcome home, Dr. Hawley. Our state will benefit from your return.

— Tom Bel Editor & Publisher
Gravitational pull of state lures Hawley into Home orbit

By DAVID CLOUSTON
Salina Journal

"Planet Jayhawk" welcomed astronaut Steve Hawley back to the nest Wednesday.

University of Kansas Chancellor Robert Hemenway made the official announcement that Hawley, a former Salinan and a 1973 KU graduate, plans to return this fall to KU as a professor of physics and astronomy. He'll also be visiting schools to promote education in science and math.

"Steve has always made it a point to share his love of science. He's a frequent guest in Kansas schools, talking about the importance of science and math," Hemenway said in his introduction of Hawley to a group of Salina Central High School students at the school's library.

Some of the students donned blue KU T-shirts given away at the event proclaiming on the back "Steve Hawley Return to Planet Jayhawk Tour."

"As a country, we've got to have greater knowledge of math and science and technology if we're going to compete in the international global economy," Hemenway said.

Hawley's and Hemenway's visit to Central High School, the building where Hawley graduated in 1969

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VIEW THE VIDEO
www.salina.com

To learn more about Steve Hawley's visit to Salina, view the video at salina.com.
Astronaut Steve Hawley announces Wednesday morning at Central High School that he is retiring from NASA and joining the University of Kansas faculty.
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(it was Salina High then), was part of a statewide press tour to announce Hawley’s affiliation with the university.

The pair also made a stop in Topeka, where Sen. Pete Brungardt, R-Salina, took time to praise Hawley on the Senate floor.

Brungardt said that Hawley’s status as a well-known astronaut, NASA administrator and brilliant, all-around good guy made his return to teach in the state a very big deal.

“You couldn’t ask for a better ambassador,” Brungardt said. “I think it’s quite a coup to have him at KU.”

Jayhawk and astronaut

In Salina, Hawley spoke against a backdrop of a photo taken on his last space mission aboard the shuttle Columbia in 1999 where he’s holding a KU shirt saying, “I’m a Jayhawk fan.”

“When I sat here almost 40 years ago, I never really thought I’d get to experience the events that I have,” Hawley said. “I’ve run into a lot of kids over the years who wanted to be astronauts and a lot of kids who wanted to be Jayhawks. I’ve been lucky enough to be both.”

Hawley said he plans to retire in May, ending a 30-year career with NASA, and relocate with his wife, Eileen, to Lawrence. Through his career, he’s flown aboard five shuttle missions, accumulating 32 days in space and deploying the Hubble Telescope and several other satellites.

Had his share of fun

He currently serves as the administrative head of NASA’s planetary and space science research department and is responsible for NASA’s collection of moon rocks, comet dust, solar wind particles and other materials.

Hawley admitted he’s wondered how he will feel, after retirement, the next time there’s a space breakthrough and he’s not on the front lines at NASA to experience it.

“That’s a really good question. … I really think now, after 30 years in the business, I’ve done my share of fun things. And I think, when we go on to whatever the next step is, it will be really interesting and I’ll be very fascinated by it, but I don’t think I’ll miss it the way I did,” he said.

He was referring to a two-year period starting in 1990 that he stepped away from the shuttle program to take on a management role at another NASA center.

If he had not been selected by NASA (“and I assumed I wouldn’t be,” he said), Hawley said he would have content in a career as an astronomy professor.

“I enjoy talking about what we’ve learned. I love astronomy, I love talking about all the new discoveries,” he said. “Frankly, I think people don’t know a lot about basic astronomy, so I’d like to be able to help that a little bit. If I can figure out how to be interesting, maybe people will come and learn a little bit of astronomy.”

Space exploration’s future

As to the future of space exploration, Hawley sees a day where commercial businesses might take over some of the tasks NASA has done. NASA wants to do the things that nobody else can do — that means the hardware and techniques that have made space-flight relatively routine.

“When other people are able to do it, I’d like to see us let them do it and we go do something else,” he said. For instance — when the shuttle is retired in 2010, “we have a little bit of an issue how to supply the space station.”

“Our international partners are developing capability, but also we’d like to see American industry develop capability to launch supplies to the station and maybe, if they can demonstrate they can do it reliably, let them launch crews, as well.”

Reporter David Clouston can be reached at 822-1403 or by e-mail at dclouston@salina.com.
Astronaut Steve Hawley announces Wednesday morning at Central High School that he is retiring from NASA and will teach physics and astronomy at the University of Kansas.
Kansas Open Meetings Act – Let’s be clear

In a perfect world, there would be no need for proposals like the one introduced by Sen. Tim Huelskamp to clarify the Kansas Open Meetings Act.

But an action by some members of the Topeka City Council – an imperfect group if ever there was one – provides ample reason why Huelskamp’s bill deserves consideration.

The proposal by Huelskamp, a Republican from Fowler, would prohibit members of governing bodies from engaging in “serial communications.”

That term has become part of the Topeka lexicon since last December, when the city council made its end run around Mayor Bill Bunten’s veto of the purchase of a backup police helicopter.

To recap, the open meetings flap came to light after five members of the council voted in favor of another type of a “communication” – this one a governing body procedure – to approve the helicopter purchase.

Later, it was revealed Deputy Mayor Brett Blackburn had contacted four members of the council – Jack Woelfel, Jeff Preisner, Deborah Swank and Lana Kennedy – by phone to seek their support of the “communication.” Some other members of the governing body hadn’t been made aware of the action.

And who were the five who voted for the “communication”? Blackburn, Woelfel, Preisner, Swank and Kennedy.

Enter Shawnee County District Attorney Robert Hecht, who investigated the discussions between the five council members.

Hecht determined there was no violation of the law. However, he ruled Blackburn may have violated the spirit of the law in contacting his four fellow council members.

And that’s where Huelskamp has stepped in.
With help from Mike Kautsch, a professor of media law at The University of Kansas, Huelskamp drafted a bill aimed at barring individual communications "that collectively involve a majority of a quorum and that share a common topic of discussion."

Kautsch summed up the need for the bill this way: "One should not be using the exception for meetings of fewer than a majority of a quorum to generate a consensus on a single issue that ought to be discussed before the public."

We couldn't agree more.

Blackburn also welcomed the proposal, saying he believed any clarification in the open meetings law is a good thing.

There's definitely a fine point to be determined here. In ruling the "communication" caper wasn't a violation of the law, Hecht cited prior court rulings saying serial communications had to be interactive - in other words, that each person Blackburn called had to understand they were part of the majority of a quorum.

The four council members who spoke with Blackburn contended Blackburn had asked only about their support of the "communication." They said Blackburn didn't mention others to whom he was talking about the issue.

What the issue proved, though, is that there is wiggle room in the open meetings law.

Here's wishing Huelskamp the best of luck in tightening the rules.