



COLBY FREE PRESS

6 pages

Colby College, Fort Hays

New system expands educational opportunities

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

A new type of technology has greatly improved access to education in western Kansas while solving many of the problems associated with distance learning, according to information provided at a Wednesday night news conference at Colby Community College.

The new system will offer higher education-type classes and graduate courses beginning as early as Wednesday, Jan. 16, 2002, said Dr. Edward H. Hammond, president of Fort Hays State University.

"It's a classic example of a 'win-win' partnership between community colleges in western Kansas and Fort Hays State University," he said.

"The real winners, though, are the people of western Kansas and the students who live in or near the six community college towns who will now have expanded access to higher education," he said. Those college towns include Colby, Great Bend, Pratt, Dodge City, Garden City and Liberal.

The creation of this new interactive television network was due in large part to the efforts of U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran who pushed hard for the \$1 million it would take to make this opportunity possible, Hammond said.

Although interactive television has been available, this latest technology and network belongs to the university with dedicated lines that will allow Fort Hays to expand its schedule of

classes. Prior to the change, Hammond said, the university had been using high school interactive networks to deliver classes at night, which meant sharing sites or competing for locations.

Often times, the former interactive television technology would fall off the system or require routing from digital to analog causing delivery problems that are now gone.

"This new system will permit students to interact simultaneously from any of the other college sites and merge needs at the same time," he said.

Hammond gave this example, "For instance, say there are a few students from several of the community colleges that need a graduate class in special education. With the new interactive technology, they can now take that class at the same time without having to leave their respective town."

He said this new technology will also further partnership goals outlined by the Board of Regents through cooperation and sharing more.

The money for the technology came from a U.S. Department of Education grant and Fort Hays State University spent about \$280,000 as well to purchase the equipment and enter into the three-year service contract for the network.

"We have signed agreements with each of the six community colleges that allow us to deliver classes on their campuses with the new equipment," he said. "In return, the community col-

leges will be able to offer classes to each other's students and will gain connectivity with the university and with each other that will provide additional benefits."

This new way of delivering education is on the cutting-edge and Dennis King, director of the university's center for teaching excellence and learning technology, said he hasn't heard of any other educational system in the nation using it.

"When we started reviewing this type of system 18 months ago," King said, "video wasn't available in this delivery mode."

However, the technology is here now, he said, and this is much improved quality for the bandwidth we have available.

The equipment on the network has cameras and microphones at the location of the instructor and in the distant classroom. The instructor and the students can see and talk to each other, King said. From his or her remote location, the instructor can operate the camera in the classroom to scan toward students and zoom in for a closer view.

Although unable to attend the conference, Moran did say that he appreciated Hammond's efforts in making this federal investment work for western Kansas.

"The development of this program is another example of how rural areas can benefit from new technology," Moran said.



PATTY DECKER/Free Press Editor

Dr. Edward H. Hammond, president of Fort Hays State University, (left) talked with Dr. Mikel Ary, president of Colby Community College, after a press conference Wednesday night about new technology that will enhance education in western Kansas.

Area school district gets approval to disorganize

TOPEKA (AP) — A gloomy sky was only fitting as the State Board of Education voted to allow the West Graham school district to cease to exist. By a 10-0 vote Wednesday, the board granted a petition for the district, based in Morland, to be disorganized and transferred to the Hill City school district. The vote reduces the number of school districts in Kansas beginning next July to 303.

"This started in 1994 with declining enrollment," said superintendent Emery Hart, who drove five hours to await the five minutes of board action.

The district closed its high school

last spring and has been sending 22 students to Hill City. Fewer than 10 are attending elementary school in Morland.

That school will close in May, Hart said, and the city is looking at ways of keeping the building open, either as a community center or means for attracting business.

West Graham has seen its enrollment decline steadily in the past decade, reflecting a trend in Graham County. The county lost nearly 17 percent of its population from 1990 to 2000, according to the latest census figures.

The population in Morland declined from 234 to 164.

K-State grad leaves \$5 million to KU; vow made many years ago carried out

LAWRENCE (AP) — A Kansas State University graduate's vow, made during the depths of the Great Depression, finally paid off — for that school's archival.

The University of Kansas announced a \$5 million gift to the KU Endowment on Wednesday — a gift not from one of its own alumni, but from a Dodge City man who felt he had been treated shabbily by Kansas State's alumni association.

The bequest from James L. Sharp, a retired accountant from Dodge City who died in 1999 at the age of 88, is among the three largest gifts ever received by the KU Endowment, offi-

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Margaret Hamilton, estate planner

cialists said.

Sharp was a Newton native who graduated from Kansas State in 1933 with a degree in business administration. Margaret Hamilton, who helped him structure his estate, said Sharp never forgave the school for what he felt was its failure to keep a promise to help him find a job.

"When (graduation) came, they just ignored him, like he did not exist," said Hamilton, a vice president at a Dodge City bank. "He had to get his own job, in a time when it wasn't easy to do that."

Sharp worked in finance and accounting at Boeing in Wichita, retiring in 1976.

"He made a vow, once he got established, that Kansas State University would never get one red cent of his estate," Hamilton said.

Sharp designated about \$3.2 million of his gift for unrestricted resources for the school — meaning it could be used in such areas as scholarships, faculty resources and materials and equipment. The remaining money will fund unrestricted scholarships, not limited to a specific school or academic department. Despite his financial success, Hamilton said, Sharp and his wife, Gladys, lived simply. She died in 1994, and the couple had no children or siblings.

Legislators hear from agriculture experts on threats to state

TOPEKA (AP) — Legislators recommended Wednesday that the state expand its agroterrorism laws to include the intentional exposure of plants to disease.

Rep. Sharon Schwartz, member of the Special Committee on Agriculture, said the state should extend the same protection to crops as it does livestock.

"What we are really looking at is agroterrorism," said Schwartz, R-Washington.

The committee also recommended that it review agroterrorism penalties. Legislators approved a bill at the end of the 2001 session that made it a felony to knowingly infect livestock with disease. The bill targeted the spread of foot-and-mouth disease.

Also, the committee wants to make sure terrorist acts designed to destroy property or release animals to advance a political cause are included as felonies under the agroterrorism

law. Similar activities in the United States have included the freeing of mink from farms or burning homes in wilderness developments, without harming humans.

"That's what they (eco-terrorists) say, anyway," said Rep. Dan Johnson, R-Hays.

Sen. Derek Schmidt, R-Independence and chairman of the committee, said plants were a logical extension of the law, given the state's reliance on wheat and corn production.

The committee also voted to encourage two legislative committees to give consideration to constructing a \$40 million biosafety research center at Kansas State University that would specialize in agroterrorism issues.

"I think we know we need to do it if we can afford to do it," Schmidt said.

Earlier in the day, the committee heard from state officials about anti-agroterrorism efforts. Officials have heightened their awareness

since the Sept. 11 suicide hijackings that killed thousands in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania. They have learned that some of the suspected terrorists may have made inquiries about using crop dusters. Since then, federal officials have grounded the planes on several occasions and increased monitoring of planes and pilots.

Terry Knowles, deputy director of the Kansas Bureau of Investigation, said agents had identified 180 aircraft and 130 licensed crop duster pilots in the state.

"This type of information and advance warning network will be helpful to law enforcement and the agriculture industry in identifying potential biological threats to Kansas," Knowles said.

Wednesday's presenters included Jerry Jaax, a Kansas State veterinarian with extensive experience in bioterrorism issues; Kevin Varner,

a veterinarian with the U.S. Department of Agriculture; and George Teagarden, director of the Kansas Animal Health Department.

Legislators also recommended a resolution urging Congress and the U.S.D.A. to take a more aggressive attack on Karnal bunt in

wheat.

The fungus contaminates wheat fields and makes the grain undesirable for consumption. No fungus has been discovered in Kansas, but state officials have taken steps to increase inspection of grain and harvesting equipment.

Top child welfare official resigns

TOPEKA (AP) — Joyce Allegrucci is leaving the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services after three years as the agency's top child welfare official.

In a memo circulated among senior staff members on Tuesday, Allegrucci, 57, said she plans to resign on Jan. 4, the Lawrence Journal-World reported today. She could not be reached for comment and department spokeswoman Stacey Herman said Allegrucci did not

want to be interviewed about the resignation.

"There's nothing amiss here," Herman said. "She has other opportunities to pursue. We're really sad to see her go."

Gov. Bill Graves called Allegrucci "a dedicated professional and a talented administrator" whose tenure has "greatly benefited the State of Kansas." Allegrucci joined SRS in 1998 as assistant secretary for child and family services.

Briefly

Weather: Cold and windy

Looks can be deceiving, so don't let the sunshine fool you. The National Weather Service forecasts mostly clear skies for the Colby region through Sunday with cold temperatures. Tonight, clear, lows in the upper teens and west winds 10-15 mph. Friday, lots of sun, windy, highs in the upper 40s, southwest winds 15-25 mph, turning to the south late. Friday night, clear, windy, lows in the middle 20s.

Saturday, partly sunny, windy, cold with highs only in the upper 30s. Saturday night and Sunday, clear, windy, lows in the upper teens to around 20 and highs in the upper 30s. Monday, partly cloudy, lows in the upper teens and highs might reach 50. Colby's high Wednesday was 41 and the overnight low this morning was 13. Precipitation remains at 0.07 inches for the month. The soil temperature at the four-inch depth is averaging 37 degrees. The records for Dec. 13: 78 in 1921 and -14 in 1961. (The daily temperatures, precipitation and records are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)

Concert tonight features many

The Colby High School concert band, under the direction of Julie Groom, will present its winter concert tonight at 7:30 p.m. in the school auditorium. Also performing will be the Colby Elementary 5th grade band the Colby High School concert choir. "Sounds of the Season" will include many well-known Christmas favorites from both bands. The concert choir, under the direction of Chris Latta, will join the band in a medley including "Winter Wonderland," "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas," and "A Marshmallow World." The highlight of the event will be the band's rendition of the bombing of the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, followed by Irving Berlin's "God Bless America." The concert is free and open to the public.

Minor injuries in wreck

Wintry weather made roadways a little more treacherous than usual Wednesday, but county law enforcement officials only had to deal with one accident, at about 3:30 p.m.

The Kansas Highway Patrol said 23-year-old Kevin Hazlett, Colby, lost control of his 1989 Chevy and slid through the median on I-70 about 12 miles south of Colby, striking a 1988 Honda driven by Danny Reynolds, 45, of Oakley. Hazlett was not injured and Reynolds was taken to Citizens Medical Center where he was treated and released, according to hospital spokesman Michael Boyles. Hazlett was not wearing a seatbelt, but Reynolds was, according to the highway patrol report.

Piano recital planned Saturday

Piano students of Pat Ziegelmeier will have a Christmas recital at 2 p.m. Saturday at the United Methodist Church. Admission is free. Everyone is welcome.

Santa letters wanted

The Colby Free Press has a special mail box for kids to send their letters to Santa. It is located in the front office and letters placed in the box may also find their way into

print in the paper. Moms and Dads are encouraged to have their kids write Santa and to bring their letters to the office. Santa is waiting to hear from Thomas County's youngsters.

Roadwork planned Tuesday

Country Club Drive will be closed to through traffic on Tuesday, Dec. 18, from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. for repairs by the Union Pacific Railroad on the crossing by the Colby Livestock Auction sale barn. For questions, call the public works department in the City of Colby at 462-4420.

Youth group plans soup supper

The Royal Rangers and Missionettes youth group with the College Drive Assembly of God Church has planned a soup supper from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m., Saturday, at the church, 245 W. College Dr. Cost for the supper is \$5 adults and \$3 for children 9 years and under. Tickets are available at the door or at First National Bank, Farmers and Merchants Bank or Central Detroit Diesel.

