



## Other Viewpoints

### University sees students' needs as important, too

Fifty dollars per semester isn't much, but Pittsburg State University officials deserve credit for using federal stimulus money to give students at least a small break on tuition.

The Kansas Board of Regents has instructed state universities to use most of their stimulus money on deferred maintenance. Those projects are among many pressing needs university officials see on their campuses.

Yet, Pittsburg State also has recognized the pressing need facing many students and their families and will spend \$375,000 of its expected \$2.7 million in stimulus money to cut \$50 off its tuition increase for the coming year. That means base tuition per semester will rise by \$66 (4 percent) in the fall, instead of \$116 (6.8 percent).

It's not much, but it's something. The University of Kansas, for instance, has announced no plans to curb tuition increases of 6 percent overall and 7 percent for freshmen entering its guaranteed tuition program. Different schools have different demands, but tuition matters.

The state's community colleges are expecting to see higher enrollment this fall because their tuition rates are significantly lower than those at state universities. Lower tuition rates also may be a selling point for the state's three smaller universities, including Pittsburg State.

Even if it's little more than a gesture, Pittsburg State's tuition cut at least indicates a certain sensitivity that those paying the tuition bill should appreciate.

— Lawrence Journal-World, via The Associated Press

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### Being a small town a big asset

It's great to live in a town where you matter. In this, Colby has something that probably many here don't fully appreciate. It's not readily measurable, but it still is important, for both the present and the future.

I've experienced life both ways. The town where I grew up is much like Colby; it's a small college town that's also a farming community. Education and agriculture are the main employers. There used to be a railroad as well, but it lost out to a larger line farther south.

Growing up in that town, I always felt like I mattered. The children's librarian had been my Sunday School teacher. One of the life guards at the swimming pool was a friend of my older brother and sister. The owners of the downtown bakery were friends of my grandparents.

I could walk, or ride a bicycle, everywhere I wanted to go. At each of those places, I found people I recognized, people I trusted, people who were linked to my life in some way. (It didn't hurt, as I learned in later years, that I had second and third cousins scattered all over the county, including some I'd never heard of.)

When I went to the doctor, his nurse was married to my dad's cousin. When I went to school, I had teachers who had taught others in my family — some who had even taught more than one generation of my family. I grew up surrounded by a community made up of people who cared what happened to me, because my life was linked to theirs. And I cared what happened to them. I noticed it, when my seventh-grade social studies teacher lost her husband. I noticed when the chief of police and the superintendent of schools retired —



**Marian Ballard**

#### • Collection Connections

not because they were important, but because they both happened to live in houses less than a block from my home. Speaking of home, I never imagined not having that particular spot of earth to go back to back then. I memorized every flaw and every wonderful secret of that place, which would be just an ordinary house to anyone else.

Then I grew up, and I did move, to places where few people knew my name. At first it was other small towns, and it didn't take long to get acquainted. Later, I moved to Kansas City to go to school. Everything was different.

At school, a small campus, there were people I became close to in a way that only seems to happen among students. We complained and suffered and celebrated together, and formed a community as much like a family as any I had experienced in a small town.

Outside the campus, however, I felt about as important as a piece of sand on the beach. I was a car on the road, a shopping cart in the store, an obstacle to step around on the street or in the park. I was invisible. What a shock to a small-town kid.

That's the way it is in a city, though. You're

a statistic, always a part of the units that get noticed. You're a part of the traffic — a small part — I once counted a hundred cars going through a major intersection while I waited my turn. You're a part of the audience — noticed only if you don't fall in line. You're one of a hundred or a thousand customers, and you get noticed only long enough to process your order, then drop off the radar screen again.

When I first came to Gem in 1995, and when I came back to Colby last year, I could tell the difference immediately. Once again, I became visible. If a store doesn't have what I need in stock, they volunteer to order it. If I go to the library to get a book, I usually don't even need to say my name to check it out, let alone dig out my library card.

I'm not alone. The kids in the neighborhood, the teens at the counter in fast-food joints, the old geezer driving down the street, are all known to many in the community. Colby has something precious, because its people are not just grains of sand, but individuals important to each others' lives.

Why bring it up now? College will be starting soon, bringing new faces to town. I hope each person here will be interested in turning those faces into familiar ones. We have something to offer — and something to gain. After all, communities need new blood now and then.

Marian Ballard has collected careers as counselor, librarian, pastor, and now copy editor for the Colby Free Press. She collects ideas,

### It's time to enjoy summer garden

Now that gardens across Kansas are bearing vegetables, it's time to taste, enjoy and appreciate the fruits of our labor.

Just a few short weeks ago, many folks walked out to their machine sheds or garages and plucked a spade out of one of the dark corners or cranked up the turf tiller and headed for the garden. Springtime on the farm or in town always means preparing the soil, planting seeds and growing food.

During a typical year, most Kansans are experiencing the dog days of summer — you know, blistering heat, strong southerly winds and little if any moisture. But this summer has been different in many regions of Kansas where timely rains and abundant moisture have produced 11-foot corn, beans with leaves the size of footballs and vegetables galore.

Every day across Kansas people are picking tomatoes, potatoes and cucumbers by the armfuls. The tomatoes my mother used to grow in Sheridan County still are the juiciest, most delicious I have ever eaten.

Growing up in the late '50s and early '60s, fresh produce wasn't as abundant in the grocery store as it is today. Knox Market, on old U.S. 24 on the west edge of Hoxie, did boast cantaloupes and watermelons trucked in from as far south as Arizona and New Mexico.

During this period, families grew their own. Many couldn't afford to go to the store and buy their fresh fruits and vegetables.

Today, while most people can afford to buy their produce from the grocery store, some still prefer to grow their own.

You just can't beat a fresh ear of corn, picked in the early morning and served slathered with



**John Schlageck**

#### • Insights

Kansas Farm Bureau

butter for dinner or supper. The kernels taste as sweet as candy. Yep, tomatoes, cucumbers, cantaloupes and watermelons all taste better when they're "fresh picked."

Also, there is nothing more satisfying than to walk out to your own garden, pick a couple of tomatoes and head for the kitchen. Once inside, wash and cut the red delight, sprinkle on a little salt and pepper. Umm, they're so good. I believe many a person said this long before Mr. Food.

And that's another thing. People are discovering once again, or in most cases for the first time, how good foods taste raw.

If you don't believe me, just bite into a fresh carrot, radish or slice up a cool, refreshing cucumber and slip it into your mouth. The proof is in the tasting.

Some of us were born with a sweet tooth. I'm one of them. Fresh fruit, ice cream and chocolates are my favorites. If you've ever picked fresh strawberries and sprinkled them on a heaping bowl of vanilla ice cream, you know you've just experienced a little bit of heaven right here on earth. Sometimes popping a few fresh ones right from the vine and into your mouth is even better.

For those concerned about saving energy,

eating fruits and vegetables fresh off the tree or out of the garden could be another option. Once you acquire a taste for fresh produce, you may never go back to cooking fruits and vegetables again.

So the next time you're out working in your garden this summer, and the sweat begins to drip down your face and into your eyes, think about all those wonderful fresh strawberries, tomatoes, peppers and cucumbers you'll soon eat on your own dinner table. When you harvest the fruits of your labor, you'll know it was worth it.

John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. He grew up on a diversified farm near Seguin, and his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.

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#### • Bruce Tinsley

