

Other Viewpoints

Cost increases drive enrollment declines

The University of Kansas released figures last week showing its overall enrollment has declined by about 2 percent. Meanwhile, 200 miles southwest of Lawrence, enrollment at Hutchinson Community College is up so much they're housing students in a hotel because they've run out of on-campus dorm space.

Why is KU's enrollment shrinking while Hutchinson's has grown 5 percent this year after a 13 percent increase last fall? It doesn't take a college degree to draw a conclusion on that one.

KU's tuition is more than \$8,000 for an in-state student this year. Hutchinson's is \$2,370.

With the recession still at the throats of Kansas families, it's pretty clear that many are either opting for institutions offering relatively low tuition or are being forced to do so.

KU is among four Kansas Board of Regents schools where fewer students enrolled this year than last, bringing overall enrollment at the Regents universities down for the first time in more than 10 years. Meanwhile, enrollment at community colleges edged up 3.3 percent overall. Technical colleges grew even more, at 5.7 percent.

Clearly, years of skyrocketing tuition have caught up to KU and other four-year schools in the Regents system. The base cost for students entering KU's four-year tuition compact – a deal in which tuition stays constant for four years – has climbed to \$7,874 this year from \$6,390 just four years ago. That's a whopping increase of \$1,484, and it's the tip of an iceberg of increases over the last decade.

Other Regents schools also bumped up their tuition at a dizzying rate.

Nothing, it seemed, could slow down the train: Not increasingly ominous signs that the economy was headed for a major setback, nor the recession itself.

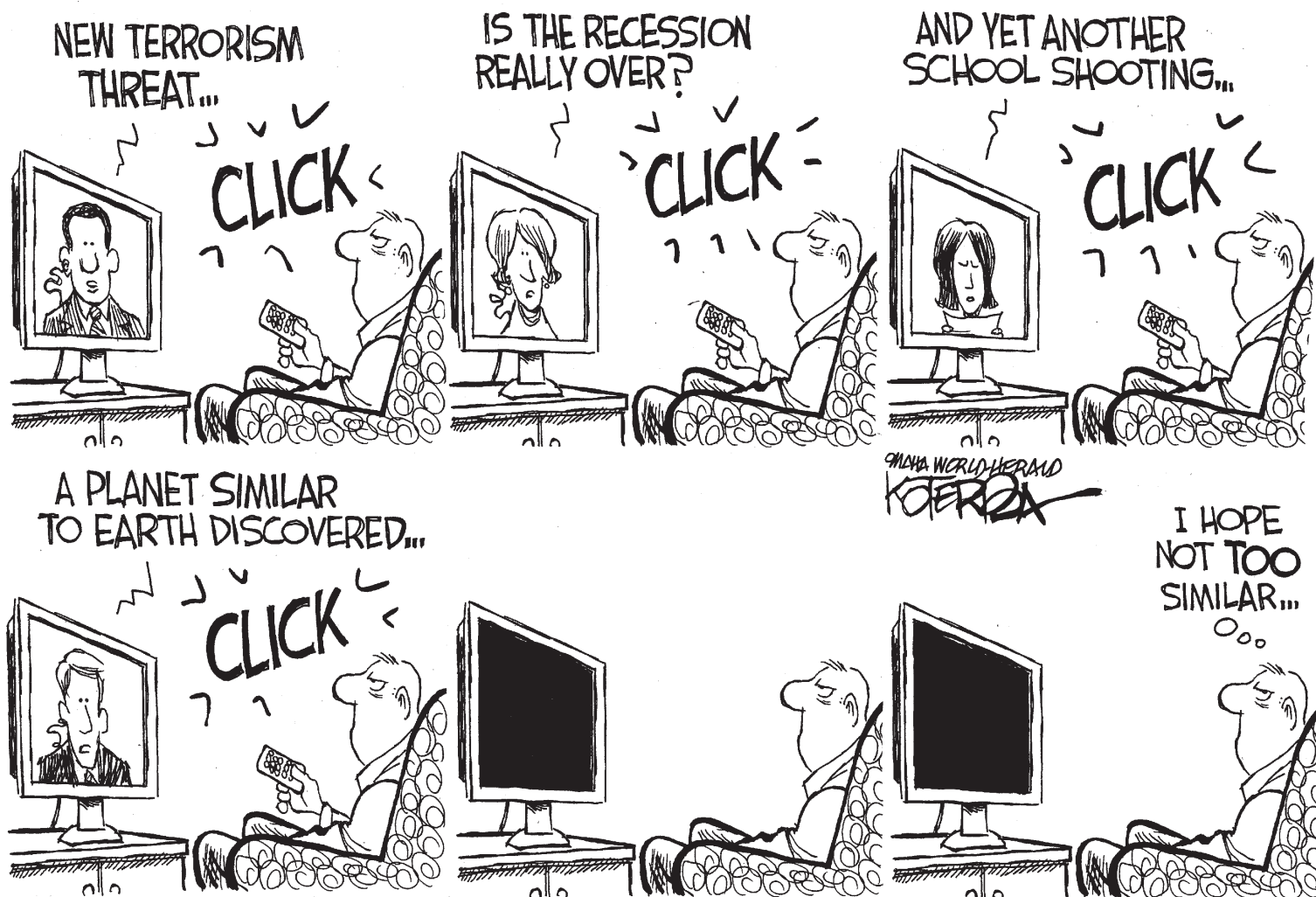
Granted, Regents administrators and the universities said the tuition increases were made necessary in large part because cuts in state funding, and it's true that support from the state has dwindled over the past several years.

But in some cases, the major universities did little to reduce their own costs as state dollars shrunk, and instead just passed the burden along to students and their families. KU's operating budget went from \$413 million in 2006 to \$515 million last year, a 25 percent increase in just three years.

Now, it appears it's time to pay the piper through a drop in enrollment. Despite years of warnings, it appears KU and other big schools have put themselves beyond the price range of an increasingly large number of families and students.

Maybe the drop will send administrators the message they seem to have been reluctant to hear in recent years: It's time to find more budget cuts and bring down the cost of tuition.

— *The Topeka Capital-Journal, via the Associated Press*



Toxic fear of change harms us all

To strike a blow against anger, hatred and much of the senseless violence occurring in the world, we need to be able to differentiate between two types of fear.

The first type of fear is the healthy kind that makes people avoid potential harm. It's the type that causes young girls not to walk alone in the city at night and keeps us from trying to make it across a busy street before getting the walk signal. This type of fear provides a check on our penchant for reckless behavior.

The other type is the fear of change. This toxic fear splits up families, religious groups, countries and even individuals. It makes the perfectly reasonable, well-educated man assault a neighbor he has coexisted with peacefully with for years because he happens to worship a different God. It makes people of one race kill people of another race or tribe simply because of paranoid fears placed in their heads by demagogues. It makes frightened, confused souls seek refuge in cults, gangs or terrorist groups. It makes a loving community throw rocks through the windows of the house some immigrants are living in.

Fear of change has always been one of the greatest catalysts for the most repugnant forms of violence. And this shouldn't really surprise anyone. Fear often leads to anger, and anger commonly leads to violence.

People with similar fears tend to join in



Andy Heintz

• Wildcat Ramblings

groups to put up a menacing front that carefully disguises their lack of self-esteem and self-confidence. They are like the people who are so terrified someone will find out they're gay that they spend their life denouncing homosexuals.

When you look at many of the distasteful things about the world, it's clear that many of these are products of fear. People of different religions kill each other because they fear people who think differently. One race discriminates against another race because they fear people who don't look like them.

A new voice, a different point of view is silenced by intimidation or violence because people didn't want to listen to ideas that challenged their preconceived notions. A country continues to despoil its own environment because people fear what an alternative lifestyle would be like.

A dictator clings to power because he fears living a normal life. A courageous activist like

Jesse Jackson continues to fight battles that have already been won because he doesn't know how to live a life devoid of rallies and speeches.

A peaceful world will never be created if people go through life fearing each other. Fear can only compel people to continue hiding behind guns, walls, borders, tanks and gated communities. It will only lead to more nuclear weapons, more wars, more gang violence, more stereotypes and more school shootings.

In a world ruled by fear, materialism and escapism will be the only short-term remedies to the madness of life.

My fears and biases are just as toxic as the next guy's, but a collective understanding of this predatory emotion would go a long way towards lessening its control over the world.

We don't have to live in a world where people are bullied, minorities are discriminated against, socially awkward kids are stuck in a state of chronic loneliness and isolation, and people are stuck in inescapable poverty.

By being constantly aware of our own fears, while also being tolerant and empathetic of the fears of others, we can create a world that is more just and free.

Andy Heintz, a K-State journalism graduate, is sports reporter for the Colby Free Press. He says he loves K-State athletics and fishing, sports and opinion writing.

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Apply critical thinking to environment

Lack of understanding and critical thinking on the part of some in the environmental movement has compromised their effectiveness as self-appointed protectors and guardians of our planet.

Whenever we improve our critical thinking skills, it becomes easier to see through deception and exaggeration characterizing the promotions of some environmental organizations and the media's coverage of their issues.

If we examine the issue of critical thinking, one of the first things we must realize is that correlation is not causation. I know I am wandering into a deep subject for such a shallow mind as mine, but bear with me.

Correlation means that two things tend to happen at the same time. Causation means that one thing is known to cause another.

Because two things happen at the same time doesn't mean one is causing the other. We need proof, including a reasonable theory showing the path by which one thing causes another to occur.

Global warming and pollution of the water supply with herbicides, for example – common environmental concerns – have been blamed partly on farmers when correlation of two things was mistaken for causation. To avoid future errors, radical environmentalists must be responsible for proving that one thing is actually causing another to happen.

They can't just say it. That doesn't make it so.

In today's world, much remains unexplained. Cancer comes to mind.

This dreaded disease might be due to genetic conditions, nutrition, a health problem in childhood, prolonged stress or a combination of these factors. One day scientists may find a cure, but that day has not arrived.

Trends don't always predict the future. During the early 1970s, some scientists predicted the advent of another ice age. During the '80s,



John Schlageck

• Insights
Kansas Farm Bureau

temperatures increased and some experts said we'd experience catastrophic global warming. The cold winter of 1993-94 prompted a new wave of hysteria about another ice age.

Today's projected cataclysms are the continued fear of global warming and the melting of the polar ice caps. Predictions of resource depletion are another reason for concern. Most of these fears are based on projections of past trends, but trends only serve as a measure of past events and cannot show what will happen down the road.

Another element of critical thinking is reliance on fact rather than opinion. So often in our society, the squeaky wheel gets the grease. The loudest or most controversial opinion receives the most attention.

This has definitely been true in the environmental movement, where claims of upcoming calamities receive extensive media coverage. To make sure experts with a minority view don't mislead the public, seek relevant facts and make up your own mind.

One reason apocalyptic abusers thrive is the general public rarely relies on its long-term memory. People are unlikely to remember a doomsayer's dire predictions of a few months ago, much less 10 or 20 years back. We must remember yesterday's false alarms and the people who sounded them if we are to respond to future calls to action.

While few people enjoy risk in their lives, we can't live without it. Everything we do has risk attached – even ordinary events like walking

down the steps (falling and breaking bones) or crossing the street (being hit by a truck).

Remember the risk of drowning (16 in a million), or dying in a home accident (90 in a million), or being killed in an auto accident (192 in a million) greatly exceed the alleged environmental risks being hawked by some organizations.

Throughout our lives, we make choices. We must decide between the black pair of shoes or the brown. We must decide on catsup, pickles or mustard on our hot dog.

The same can be said about our environment. We have to choose our priorities. We can't do everything at once. To do so could produce unintended consequences that could harm the world in which we live.

Instead, we must apply the same prudence we apply to other significant aspect of our lives. The importance of environmental issues doesn't exempt them from this discipline. Their importance makes careful planning and efficiency all the more necessary.

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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