

Other Viewpoints

Regents must show how bigger budget will boost the state

It won't be easy to sell the Kansas Legislature on a budget increase next year, but the best shot the Kansas Board of Regents has is to show in detail how additional money would be used help address certain gaps in the state's work force.

Commenting on news that the state budget director planned to propose a spending freeze for higher education next year, University of Kansas and regents officials accurately pointed out that a well-trained work force would be essential to the state's economic recovery.

Two areas in which higher education hasn't been able to keep up with demand are nursing and engineering. The regents, in fact, have asked the state for \$14.5 million to produce more graduates in those and other high-need fields.

At least in the area of engineering, higher education officials aren't the only ones voicing concern. In fact, they may find a sympathetic ear in Senate President Steve Morris, who talked about the issue at last month's Kansas Economic Policy Conference at KU.

"I'm firmly convinced," he said, "that the shortage of engineers is hurting our state economy overall."

He noted that graduating more engineers would take a multilevel approach. High school counselors need to put more emphasis on engineering careers and make sure students are adequately prepared to pursue engineering degrees when they get to college. Too often, Morris said, students who plan to study engineering are unprepared for the rigorous program and end up changing their major.

Morris said that if secondary and post-secondary schools in the state can address the attrition problem for engineering majors, the state then will have to come up with the faculty and "bricks and mortar" to support the increased enrollment.

This sounds like a legislator who could be convinced to make a greater investment in a program that he considers vital to the state's future. It's an opening that Kansas higher education officials should try to take advantage of.

It's not enough just to say "give us more money." The Regents must show exactly how an investment in certain programs will pay off by filling key gaps in the Kansas workforce. Morris probably isn't the only legislator concerned about some of those gaps, but in a year when every penny will count, higher education officials need to make the case that added money will have a tangible impact on the state's economic health.

—Lawrence Journal-World

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Colby, Kan. 67701 fax (785) 462-7749

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State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout, Columns, Editorial Writing, Sports Columns, News, Photography. Official newspaper of Thomas County, Colby, Brewster and Rexford.

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THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the days observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Nor'West Newspaper, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday. MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news herein. Member Kansas Press Association and National Newspaper Association.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: In Colby, Thomas County and Oakley: three months \$35, one year \$85. By mail to ZIP Codes beginning with 676 and 677: three months \$39, one year \$95. Elsewhere in the U.S., mailed once per week: three months \$39, one year \$95. Student rate, nine months, in Colby, Thomas County and Oakley, \$64; mailed once per week elsewhere in the U.S. \$72.



RUFFALO © 2010 THE AUGUSTA CHRONICLE 12/1

Classics means Crosby, not pop stars

OK, I've had the Christmas channel on the radio all day.

It's the holidays, so sue me.

Not the "modern" Christmas channel, either — no "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree" or "Silent Night" by Elvis. No, the one called "Christmas Traditions" that takes the place of the '40s channel.

So I've been listening to Bing Crosby sing "White Christmas" and "Winter Wonderland" a lot. What a voice.

Then there's Dean Martin, Sammy Davis Jr., Perry Como singing "Ave Maria" (not really a Christmas song, but it'll do), Frank Sinatra — not my favorite human being, but a decent singer nonetheless. And not a bad actor, either.

There's plenty of air time for "Frosty, the Snowman," "Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer," and "Let It Snow," all secular tunes only vaguely related to the holiday.

Then, of course, there's "Jingle Bells." That's not exactly a Christmas song, but neither is "Silver Bells." And I like them both.

And while we're on the subject, when — and how — did "My Favorite Things" get on this playlist? It's not even a winter song. Certainly not a Christmas song. Just a nice little show tune from "The Sound of Music."



Steve Haynes

• Along the Sappa

Oh, well. It has at least as much to do with the holidays as "Frosty," and it's a better song. Even if I do have a bad reaction to "The Sound of Music." Nothing against Rogers and Hammerstein or Julie Andrews. Just say I was working at a theater when the movie came out, and we did continuous showings 9 a.m. to midnight...and I was pushed beyond the breaking point.

I don't like to think about it.

I haven't had the nerve to turn to the contemporary channel yet. It's an odd mix of non-Christmas tunes and rock stars signing carols, some of them very nicely done. If it were all carols, I might listen more.

I'm old fashioned, I guess. A sentimentalist. I like to hear carols. I can listen to Bing Crosby or Elvis sing "Silent Night." I can listen to a choir. It's all good for me.

There are some good contemporary Christ-

mas tunes, though mostly they're not very reverent. One of my favorites is "Merry Christmas From the Family," by Robert Earl Kean Jr., a cowboy singer of sorts. It's not very religious, but cute, in a white-trashy sort of way. Think Spam and spray cheese, fake snow and lights on the trailer.

The best cover I've heard — is by folk singer Jill Sobule. You can find it on YouTube if you want, but there's no shortage of "holiday" tunes of all sorts.

Changing the subject, did you know there was "Blue Christmas" before Elvis. Yup. Earnest Tubb recorded it in 1948, nine years before the King. Since then, everybody has recorded it. Everybody. One site lists more than 157 distinct recorded versions.

Still, I'd rather hear — or sing — carols. And the best place for that, unless you happen to open the front door and find singers outside, is church on Christmas Eve. It's the one night of the year when the choir director won't dig up something unsingable to try out. Usually.

And if you can sing "Silent Night" and maybe "We Three Kings" (thought that's really for Epiphany) and leave humming "Joy to the World," then you'll have had a good night.

And be in touch with The Reason for the Season, as well.

She takes Thanksgiving on the road

I kept thinking of the book, "A Movable Feast," by Ernest Hemingway as we winged our way east last week.

The only similarity between our food and cooking equipment, packed truck and the book about Hemingway's life in Paris was the title, but it kept popping up into my head.

After remembering how we packed the turkey, trimmings and younger children in the car and headed for Wyoming years ago, I started to feel the urge to head for Lawrence to spend the holiday with our son, who would be spending the day without family.

Of course, Thanksgiving dinner in an efficiency apartment with a young man who works nights and sleeps until noon most days would be a challenge.

But neither he nor his father was going to complain about the food, so I wasn't too worried.

I went to the store for a turkey, and found a 14-pounder. I put the roaster I use for giant batches of chili, soup suppers and Thanksgiving turkeys in the back of the truck. In a box, I put the electric carving knife and a large sharp knife, as well as the onion and celery I put in the cavity and the ingredients for the browning sauce.

Without a browning sauce, the turkey will get nicely cooked and taste great in a roaster,



Cynthia Haynes

• Open Season

but it won't brown. The sauce, while purely cosmetic, just makes it more appealing.

Next, I made up the stuffing, the cranberry salad and a cranberry-and-sweet-potato recipe I wanted to try, and put them all in the refrigerator until we pulled out.

Four cans of green beans, potatoes and extra onions went into the box of odds and ends.

When we were ready to hit the road at 5 p.m. Wednesday, I had one cooler packed with the refrigerated items, which included butter and bacon, just in case.

A second cooler contained the frozen leftovers — stuffed peppers, fried chicken, steak soup and green chili — I always take to our bachelor son.

We headed east. At 10:30 p.m. we pulled into his parking lot and unloaded the food into his fridge. We talked for a little while and then headed for our hotel.

At 8 a.m. Thanksgiving Day, I got up and

drove back to the apartment to start the turkey. Both Steve and son were still asleep.

With the turkey on, I put the stuffing and sweet potato casserole in the oven and started to prepare the green beans. I put one can in the pot, two cans in the pot, three cans in the pot. Uh oh, why are there peas in my green beans? Steve hates peas.

First I tried to separate the beans and peas. That didn't work, so I headed out to find an open grocery.

By the time both the boys were up, the potatoes were ready to mash, the green beans were all beans and the turkey was just about ready to go.

We enjoyed our holiday dinner and all watched a little television. Then it was time to go home. We divided the leftovers and hit the road.

In all we spend about 12 hours on the road and 16 in Lawrence, half of that asleep. But we got to see our son and had a family holiday dinner.

And what more can you ask for than that?

Cynthia Haynes, co-owner and chief financial officer of Nor'West Newspapers, writes this column weekly. Her pets include cats, toads and a praying mantis. Contact her at c.haynes@nwkansas.com

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

