

Governor: State must improve higher education rankings

Gov. Sam Brownback told the Kansas Board of Regents last Wednesday the leaders of the state's public universities and colleges must take bold steps to improve the quality and academic rankings of Kansas schools.

The Governor met the board members during their annual retreat.

"Our universities and colleges are engines of our state's economy. We must do better. We must alter course and find ways of making them more competitive," Gov. Brownback said. "Though we face some difficult economic times, I feel we have some excellent opportunities to improve our position in the national standings. Our administration will be a partner in this effort."

To improve school academic rankings, Brownback said the Regents should consider setting measurable goals, focus funding on key educational programs and get input from leaders of Kansas.

"In order for our Regents Institutions to be successful, we can learn a few lessons from our student athletes. We must adopt a game-plan that plays to our strengths and fully utilizes our talent," Brownback said. "From there, we must work as a team and execute our strategy. The people of Kansas are rooting for us and we cannot let them down. If we have a team mentality, we will win."

The Kansas Board of Regents oversees 32 universities, colleges, community colleges and technology colleges with a combined attendance of nearly 200,000 students.

Ranking of Kansas Universities According to U.S. News and World Report's 2010-2011 University ranking system, this is how Kansas universities ranked.

- How Kansas' three national universities rank out of 260:
- University of Kansas ranked 104th (down from 96th in 2009)
- Kansas State University ranked

134th (down from 130th in 2009)

- Wichita State University ranked in the bottom 25 percent (no change from 2009)

How national university programs ranked:

- KU's Engineering Department ranked 94th (down from 90th in 2009)
- KSU's Veterinary Medicine Department ranked 19th out of 28
- Neither KSU nor WSU's engineering departments cracked the top 100.

How the state's four regional universities are ranked out of 141 Midwest Universities in the Master's Program:

- Pittsburg State University ranked 72nd (unranked in 2009)
- Washburn University ranked 58th (down from 36th in 2009)
- Emporia State University ranked 84th
- Fort Hays State University is unranked.

Governor encourages investment in wind energy infrastructure

Gov. Sam Brownback expressed his support for wind energy infrastructure projects at the Heartland Transmission Conference last Tuesday at Hutchinson Community College.

Gov. Brownback spoke to more than 100 stakeholders at the event, which focused on expanding and modernizing the electrical grid for the Heartland's clean energy future.

"The renewable energy sector of the Kansas economy cannot reach its full potential without increased transmission capacity," Gov. Brownback said. "Wind energy can't be moved in rail cars or through a pipeline; it can only be delivered via high voltage wires and large scale transmission projects."

Gov. Brownback compared the role the Kansas highway system

plays in transporting wheat to the market and the role the electrical grid plays in transporting Kansas wind to consumers in our state and beyond. He discussed the importance of taking a balanced approach to energy policy.

"I want Kansas to be known as the 'Renewable State.' To get there, we have to balance the three E's: Energy, Economy and the Environment. My first priority as governor is to grow the Kansas economy, and getting wind power to market is a key component in accomplishing that," Gov. Brownback said.

Brownback encouraged attendees to help him get the word out to the nation about how affordable wind energy from Kansas has become.

"Now is the time to buy Kansas wind," Brownback said. "A combination of events has occurred

that have driven the cost of wind energy to historic lows. With federal production tax credits possibly expiring next year, wind developers are motivated to sell. Kansas wind is very competitive with the tradition sources of energy and buyers can get guaranteed rates for the next 20 years."

The Heartland Transmission Conference was hosted by the Energy Future Coalition and the Climate and Energy Project. It brought leading regional and national experts on renewable energy and transmission together to discuss key issues related to the planning, cost allocation, and siting of transmission lines, as well as the role of local, state and federal governments. Participants included environmental interest groups, landowners, electric utility companies, and researchers.

Mural completed for alumni



The mural along the north side of the building at 10th and Main was basically completed in time for the all-school reunion. Some details remain to be added as well as the year each store was opened in Goodland. A lot of alumni stopped to admire the tremendous undertaking.

Photo by Tom Betz/The Goodland Star-News

I-70 work continues in Sherman

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drege, Neb., will begin to replace the lights at interchanges 17 and 19 around Oct. 1. The lights at those two exits will be complete by March - while the lights at Exits 1, 9, and 12 won't be replaced until 2013.

The process to rebuild the actual driving lanes of I-70 from the state line to Caruso will not begin until next construction season. The entire project will take over two years to

construct, with a final completion date of Oct. 2013 - when the roadway will re-open to unrestricted traffic. Other than some dirt work, the project will shut down during the winter months from approximately October to April each year.

While the roadway is being reconstructed, all I-70 traffic will be placed in the eastbound lanes while the westbound lanes are reconstructed during the 2012 season. The eastbound lanes will be

upgraded in 2013.

Please use caution, pay attention to the work zone signs, and respect workers when driving through any road work zone. Slow down and "Give 'Em A Break".

KDOT awarded this construction contract totaling \$46 million to Koss Construction Co., of Topeka. The construction job is funded by T-WORKS, the transportation program passed by the Kansas Legislature.

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