

# Kansas gets good return on money

By Sharon Corcoran  
*The Goodland Star-News*

Imagine being able to invest \$680 million and then getting a \$5.2 billion return. That's what Dr. Edward H. Hammond, president of Fort Hays State University, says Kansas gets back for its investment in higher education.

Hammond visited Goodland on Thursday as part of his annual tour to raise awareness about education issues.

Citing information from the Kansas Board of Regents and the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, the university president said the state is providing a good education and is improving.

The center's state report card on higher education, "Measuring Up 2004," proves that, Hammond said. It shows Kansas colleges are delivering real value.

Kansas tied for first among the 50 states (earning an A) in participation, he said, the number of high school graduates going to college. The state ranked seventh in preparation (earning a B), Hammond said, ninth in completion (earning a B) and 13th in benefits to the state (earning a B+).

Those figures include 37 colleges, universities and technical schools in the state, Hammond said. "We have this tremendous asset that is performing very well," he said.

That is the good news. The bad news, Hammond said, is that the state's general fund support for higher education has dropped from 20 percent of the fund when he arrived at Hays 17 years ago to just 13 percent this year.

Education for grades K-12 is 50 percent of the state's budget, Hammond said, and Medicaid, the medical program for public assistance clients, is 16 percent. Of Fort Hays' total operating budget, Hammond said, about half, or \$30 million, comes from the state.

Fort Hays is working on faculty salaries, Hammond said. Citing research from the Citizens for Higher Education, Hammond said faculty salaries at the university fall well below those at comparable former teachers colleges, such as the University of Southern Colorado, the University of Nebraska at Kearney and the University of Central Oklahoma.

The average pay, he said, is \$10,000 per year lower in Hays. "This at a time when we are try-

ing to keep our best and brightest faculty," he said.

Other colleges and universities in the state are experiencing a budget crunch. The state received an F in affordability on the report card, indicating students are paying more than their share of the bills.

This is apparently a nationwide trend, Hammond added. The highest grade in affordability was a B, earned by California; Utah earned a C, Minnesota a C-, a few states a D or D-, but most flunked, just like Kansas.

The shortage of money is showing up in campus facilities, Hammond said. Two out of three buildings owned by the state are on the six university campuses, and the 537 campus buildings have a replacement value of \$3.9 billion.

A survey by the Kansas Board of Regents showed a building maintenance backlog of \$584 million and growing, Hammond said. Of that total, he added, \$35.2 million is on the Hays campus.

"We cannot stand by and watch this investment deteriorate," he said.

To take care of the facilities in the meantime, he said, colleges and universities have done all they can to manage well.

Some are raising tuition to supplement their budgets, Hammond said, but Fort Hays has chosen to keep tuition down. The university could either charge more money, he said, or serve more people, and it chose to serve more people.

One way it is doing that, he said, is through its Virtual College. The university has 491 students in northwest Kansas and 560 in southwest Kansas, Hammond said, who will never set foot on campus.

There are 28 students from Sherman County attending classes on campus, he said, and 15 attending the Virtual College either on-line or through interactive television classes.

There are interactive television outreach locations at Colby, Concordia, Garden City, Liberal, Dodge City, Pratt and Great Bend.

"We are doing everything we can to protect the asset," Hammond said, "and to serve as many as possible."



Hammond



## Getting experience

Daniel Ordonez, an engineering teacher with the Northwest Kansas Technical College (right), looked over the shoulder of student Shaun Brown as the class worked to get measurements of the street at Main and 12th Street on Tuesday. Stephanie Kramer said she was glad to be earning the required hours of hands-on surveying with her class on an interesting project. Data collected by the students will be used by the firm in the rebricking project on Main. Ordonez said his classes do a survey project each year for Evans, Bierly, Hutchinson and Associates, P.A. a consulting firm with offices here. "It's an excellent learning experience for the students," he said. Photos by Kathryn Burke/The Goodland Star-News



# Water, sewer rates to increase in January

By Tom Betz  
*The Goodland Star-News*

The Goodland City Commissioners raised water and sewer rates Monday to balance the city's utility funds for next year, hiking the water minimum \$2 per month and sewer charges by 13 cents.

City Manager Ron Pickman told the commissioners during the budget discussions that without a rate increase, both the sewer and water funds would remain in the red. The funds have been dropping in the past couple of years, he said, and under state law, when the funds drop below a profitable rate, there can be no transfers to the general fund.

Mayor Rick Billinger had sug-

gested that to help the water fund come closer to breaking even, the monthly minimum rate be raised by \$2 per month.

Monday the commission approved an ordinance raising the monthly minimum from \$3.60 to \$5.60 per month. The minimum covers the first 300 gallons per month, and the rate per 100 cubic feet over 300 remains at 95 cents.

Pickman said this may help bring the water fund closer to breaking even, but with a drop in water sales during the drought this year, the revenue for the water fund will be down further than expected.

The second ordinance the commission approved changes the monthly rates for the sewer fund to help keep it in balance.

A formula adopted by the commission two years ago is used to determine the annual sewer rates, and for next year the monthly minimum will increase by 13 cents a month from \$4.43 to \$4.56. There is a usage charge based on the monthly water usage for December, January and February for residential customers, and the charge for next year will drop by 2 cents from \$1.10 to \$1.08 per 100 cubic feet of water used during those months.

Commercial sewer rates are based on the amount of water used each month, and Pickman said that since new sewer rates were put into effect in the spring, a number of large water users have installed a second meters for outdoor use so they can keep track of what actually

goes into the waste water system.

All city customers will see the new water rates on their monthly bills in February, he said, and the sewer rates will begin in January.

City Clerk Mary Volk said the new sewer rates will go into effect in January, but the monthly usage charge — based on the monthly water usage — will be adjusted in March.

Part of the sewer fund program is to provide funds for the future maintenance and replacement of the treatment plant, with \$59,200 set aside annually. The city commission has not made a decision replacing the sewage treatment system, but once it does, sewer rates will be increased to cover the debt on bonds to pay for the new project.

# City manager gets praise and small raise

By Tom Betz  
*The Goodland Star-News*

The Goodland City Commission held two 10-minute closed-door sessions Monday to discuss the evaluation of City Manager Ron Pickman, and when they came back into open session, Mayor Rick Billinger announced they were go-

ing to give Pickman a \$1,000 raise for next year.

Billinger apologized for the way the evaluation process had been handled at the previous commission meeting on Oct. 18. At that time, the commission spent considerable time in closed session discussing the evaluation, and had a closed ses-

sion with Pickman to discuss the evaluation.

At the end of the meeting there was no announcement about the results of the evaluation, except that Mayor Billinger said they were going to keep Pickman.

Monday Billinger said, "The commission members appreciate what you (Pickman) are doing. It is a top-notch job."

"We want to give you a little raise for next year, and know you understand we are limited by the budget."

"We are going to give you a \$1,000 a year raise."

The meeting adjourned at 6:25 p.m. without the commission mak-

ing a motion or voting to approve the raise for Pickman.

When asked about the raise Tuesday, Pickman said he would have to wait for official commission action.

Commissioner Jim Mull said Tuesday afternoon he had not thought about the fact they had not made the motion until much later.

"I thought to myself we announced the \$1,000 raise, but didn't make a motion," Mull said. "We will have to do that at the next commission meeting."

"I just realized it today, and knew we had until January to make it official."

## matters of record

### District Traffic

The following fines were paid in the Sherman County District Court: **Oct. 18** — Nhi TK Nguyen, 29, Littleton, Colo. was fined \$240 for failure to yield to emergency vehicle.

Jessica L. Buchanan, 21, Orange Beach, Ala. was fined \$108 for speeding.

Jerry McGee, 71, Leighton, Ala. was fined \$114 for speeding.

Rafael L. Vargas, 40, Santa Ana, Calif. was fined \$144 for speeding.

Rudolph A. Stevens, 33, Chicago, Ill. was fined \$96 for speeding and \$10 for no seat belt.

Michael Albert, 30, Prattville, Ala. was fined \$84 for speeding.

Robert F. Smith, 47, Parachute, Colo. was fined \$144 for speeding.

Denise Temprow, 68, Pocono Manor, Pa. was fined \$222 for speeding.

### corrections

The Goodland Star-News will correct any mistake or misunderstanding in a news story. Please call our office at (785) 899-2338 to report errors. We believe that news should be fair and factual. We want to keep an accurate record and appreciate you calling to our attention any failure to live up to this standard.

## student of the week



ing with my friends and my favorite subjects are math and Chemistry. I will remember all the great trips with FCCLA like going to nationals in Chiago and working on projects in Science Olympiad.

**Activities involved in at school:** FCCLA, yearbook, webmaster, Science Olympiad, wrestling manager.

**My choice of movies, books, and games:** Movie is October Sky, book is "Fever of 1793" by Laurie Halse Anderson. games are card games and Monopoly and my hobbies are digital photography, woodworking and 4-H.

**After I leave Goodland High School I intend to:** go to college and get a degree in Agriculture.

**And 10 years from now, I think I'll be:** Happily married and holding a good job that I enjoy.

**Favorite Quote:** "There's always next year" - Farmer -

**Name:** Aaron Duell  
**Parents:** Steve and Colleen Duell

**Grade:** Junior  
**Age:** 16

**We've nominated this student because:** Aaron has taken on the task of webmaster for the school website (<http://lskyways.lib.ks.us/schools/goodland/>). With his hard work, initiative and an insight of web design. Aaron has made some big improvements on the website.

**Student Comment:** Favorite aspect of school life is be-

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