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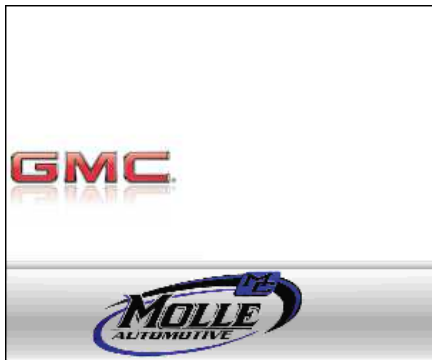
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Kansas Board of Regents aims to repair classrooms

BY KATIE STOCKSTILL THE MORNING SUN

The Kansas Board of Regents believe they have found the answer to increased economic development for the state of Kansas - repair the crumbling classrooms.



According to a new report issued by the Kansas Board of Regents, restoring and repairing state buildings located on state university campuses would not only help the schools, it would benefit the entire economy of Kansas.

The report, authored by the Docking Institute of Public Affairs located on the Fort Hays State University campus, outlines the economic impact of deferred maintenance spending for the state of Kansas.

Using the \$727 million state-wide maintenance backlog, the report states that the state's economy would see an increase of \$1.63 billion in the economic output of goods and services, a \$468.5 million increase in earnings in the state and

approximately 14,000 new jobs.

"This report displays the substantial and positive economic impact that a comprehensive state university building maintenance funding solution would have on the state's economy," Reginald Robinson, President and CEO of the Kansas Board of Regents, said in a press release. "University maintenance funding would produce a dramatic ripple effect through the state's economy creating thousands of new jobs, millions of dollars in increased earnings and billions of dollars in increased state economic output. As state policy makers continue to focus on ways to improve the state's economy, they need not look any farther than our crumbling state universities."

And along with the entire state economy profiting from the repairs, town and areas with universities will also see a boost.

Pittsburg State University has an estimated \$39.8 million in deferred maintenance backlog.

Anil Lal, associate professor of economics, finance and banking at Pittsburg State University said that the local economic impact multiplier is lower than the states but that the area would still see a major boost.

Using a local multiplier of 1.38, the Pittsburg economy, and economy of surrounding communities could see an increase in economic output of \$54.93 million.

Paul Stewart, director of facilities planning for Pittsburg State, said that construction materials and local labor are just a few of the economic impacts of construction.

"I definitely believe there is a local benefit in many ways from construction projects," Stewart said.

Along with an increase in economic output, the area could see an increase of over 700 new jobs as well.

But until money is set aside by the Kansas legislature, maintenance issues cannot be addressed. An issue, school officials and the Board of Regents said, is only growing worse.

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House, governor split over repair costs

By Scott Rothschild

Sunday, April 1, 2007

Topeka — With time running out in the 2007 legislative session, Gov. Kathleen Sebelius and House Republican leaders are far apart on how to pay for repairs at regents universities.

“We need to deal with that issue this year,” Sebelius said.

The Legislature meets Monday and Tuesday before taking a break and then returning April 25 for a wrap-up session.

Universities have said they need \$663 million to take care of deferred repairs and maintenance projects.

But in the latest proposal, House Republican leaders offered \$75 million in additional funding over five years, called for an increase in nonresident tuition, would make \$300 million in low-interest loans available, and would give counties with regents schools the opportunity to raise their sales tax rate by one-tenth of a cent for maintenance projects.

Sebelius said the \$75 million “addresses a piece of the puzzle, but in no way addresses the problem.”

And of the part that would allow county commissioners to increase sales tax in local counties, she said, “I’m not sure that that is a sensible way to solve the deferred maintenance problem.”

Douglas County Administrator Craig Weinaug said a one-tenth of a cent sales tax increase in Douglas County would raise \$1.4 million per year. KU’s share of the deferred maintenance projects is approximately \$260 million.

“What they are suggesting would be a drop in the bucket,” Weinaug said.

In addition, he said, from a public policy standpoint, the proposal doesn’t make sense.

“It would be like saying the Shawnee County taxpayers ought to be paying for maintenance on the Capitol building,” he said.

Republicans have defended the bill, saying it is a good starting point for discussions.

“We have to have a framework,” said House Appropriations Chairwoman Sharon Schwartz, R-Washington. “We’ve done the responsible thing to take a step forward.”

The Senate hasn’t adopted a plan for deferred maintenance, and Sebelius’ proposal to increase turnpike tolls has gotten no support in the Legislature.

The legislation adopted last week to expand casino gambling in Kansas says a portion of the revenue returned to the state can be used for repairs to schools, but no specific amount has been dedicated.

On another front, Sebelius finds herself at odds with House GOP leaders on a proposal to allow Johnson County voters to decide whether to increase either sales or property taxes, or a combination of the two, to fund a research authority that would be used to help the KU Medical Center and Edwards Campus.

“Letting the people of Johnson County make the decision of whether they think this is a viable economic opportunity makes good sense to me,” she said.

But House Majority Leader Ray Merrick, R-Stilwell, said he wanted to protect taxpayers from a tax increase.

He said he feared that under the proposal, well-financed interests would mount an expensive campaign to persuade voters to raise their taxes.

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The Softest Touch

Repair proposal could hurt virtual learning at Fort Hays

By Chris Green

Harris News Service

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TOPEKA - Fort Hays State University could bear the brunt of a proposal hiking out-of-state tuition to help fund campus repairs.

The plan could be particularly harmful for a growing program that serves students in China via the Internet, higher education officials said this past week.

A plan before the Kansas House budget committee would require the state Board of Regents to increase non-resident charges to the national average. The new funds generated would go toward \$727 million in deferred maintenance at state universities.

However non-resident tuition increases could cripple a university program that's helped hold down costs for Kansas students attending the school, said Fort Hays State President Edward Hammond.

"It would have a devastating impact on our virtual college, especially our international initiatives," Hammond said.

Although no school would be required to raise their charges by more than 5 percent in a single year, Board of Regents President Reggie Robinson testified recently that such increases could cause enrollments to drop.

In fact, as much as 10 percent of the revenue generated by such a hike could come from students at Fort Hays State's virtual college despite the fact that none of those students actually use college buildings.

The plan before the House also allows Ellis and Saline counties, as well as other university counties, to raise local sales tax by a tenth of a cent to fund repairs.

Hammond said that during the fall semester, 4,798 of the 9,307 students enrolled in Fort Hays State were taking courses on-line through the university's virtual colleges. About 2,200 of them were part of a program with schools in China.

The national average for non-resident undergraduate tuition and fees for this academic year is \$15,783. But Fort Hays State charges only \$10,038, according to figures supplied by the state Board of Regents.

A hike of 5 percent would require a \$500-per-year increase in out-of-state tuition charges.

An increase in out-of-state tuition could hurt the program, officials say, because Chinese students and their families earn an average of \$2,800 a year.

"These families are sacrificing substantially to take the 30 hours from us that they need to get a joint degree," Hammond said. "They just wouldn't be able to do it."

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Hammond said that an increase in out-of-state tuition could have big implications for in-state students, as well.

Charging just under \$1,600 a semester in tuition and fees for full-time resident students, the university has the lowest rates among the state's six public universities.

But a decrease in out-of-state enrollment could force tuition increases on state residents, Hammond said.

"One of the reasons why we have the lowest in-state tuition of any of the regents' schools has been the tremendous growth of our virtual school, half of which is our international program," Hammond said.

Hammond said it's also unclear what effect the House's proposal would have on "mid-state tuition," a reduced rate that's available for students from Colorado or Nebraska that attend Fort Hays State.

An increase would have a "real detrimental effect on the ability of our ability to recruit people to the state," he said.

House budget Chairwoman Sharon Schwartz, R-Washington, said the House's plan was just a framework for developing a plan to address university maintenance.

Her committee is scheduled to continue its discussion of the plan Monday.

She said it would probably be a good idea to take each institution's situation into account. No one wants to hurt Fort Hays State's program, she said.

"They have built a program that's really immensely successful," Schwartz said.

Rep. Eber Phelps, D-Hays, said he's hopeful that lawmakers will keep in mind the need for Fort Hays State to have competitive tuition rates.

"They're like any other university in that they're trying to get that share of the market," Phelps said.

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