

### Other **Viewpoints**

# State colleges face dwindling support

In an interview with a Kansas City newspaper last week, Kansas State University President Kirk Schulz made the surprising prediction that his public university would be operating entirely on private money within the next 20 years.

It would be easy to dismiss his statement simply as a lastditch attempt to influence the Kansas Legislature as it decides on higher-education money for the fiscal year that begins July 1. Unfortunately, the trend for state funding of higher education backs up Schulz's assertion.

Ten years ago, the state was providing 42 percent of K-State's budget. That figure has dropped to 22 percent today. The University of Kansas has seen a similar drop in state support, which now makes up just 26 percent of KU's operating budget. The rest comes from tuition, grants and endowments. By comparison, the University of Missouri gets 35 percent of it's money from the state.

The decline in Kansas college funding has been steady for years, accelerated by the recent economic downturn. The state budget for higher education has been cut by 13 percent in the past year. Even with sizable tuition increases to try to take up the slack, universities have been forced to lay off faculty and staff and reduce offerings.

With that kind of history, it's not hard to imagine the day when "public universities" in Kansas will be getting along without public money.

In fact, Daniel Hurley, director of state relations for the American Association of State Colleges, told the newspaper that Schulz was "right on target."

"If he had said three years or five years, I'd say no," Hurley said, "but 20 is not beyond the realm of possibility, especially for large public schools with high enrollments and big endowments like a K-State." Or a KU.

Schulz's statement shouldn't be taken as a threat to legislators. It's more a simple reflection of reality. Generations of Kansans have valued higher education and been willing to invest in public universities to educate Kansas youngsters and fuel the state's economic engine. However over the last decade or two – well before the current economic crisis – Kansas lawmakers started a trend that has systematically reduced the percentage of state university budgets funded by the state.

Faced with a \$510 million budget shortfall, it seems unlikely that legislators will find a way to reverse that trend next year. The question is what will happen five, 10 or 20 years down the road.

Will state legislators find a way to reaffirm their financial commitment to public universities in Kansas? Or, as Schulz predicts, will those universities have to find other ways grants, gifts and probably much higher tuition - to pay for their operating budgets.

- The Lawrence Journal-World, via the Associated Press

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# Time is relative in the newsroom

As I write this, it's Friday afternoon. A short time ago, we finished putting together the Friday paper and sent it to the press. Now it's time for me to get in my time machine.

Like everyone else, Friday afternoon makes my thoughts turn to the weekend's chores and activities – and time off. But first, I have to get through the rest of the day. That means a trip to the future, and a trip to the past as well.

After fixing a newspaper, as in fixing a meal, there are always cleanup duties. Those go to me. On my computer, I put away the stories and pages that are finished, just like I put away the mustard after a meal. The day's folders go into the month's folders - which will in turn go into the year's folders. Stories that are used are filed, while stories that are still waiting for room get moved ahead for the next paper.

There's one more look back, as I put a paper or two from last week on our web site. So, I've been looking at April 30 pages and stories and May 3 stories. Now I need to think about April 23 pages and April 26 pages, at least long enough to get the right pages in the right places.

Now, it's time to look ahead. The first page to be built for almost every paper is the comic page. I start these a week or two ahead of time



#### Marian **Ballard**

 Collection Connections

comic pages, I think about May 3, and also May 10 and May 17, along with all the papers in between.

Do I have what needs to go on those pages in the Free Press computer, or do I need to get it from the website? Do I have all the pieces on the pages in the right place? Is the right answer to the right puzzle in the right place? Is Hagar the Horrible invading under the heading for Mother Goose and Grimm? Once in a while, it happens. (Someone just mentioned that the Friday Zits was also in Thursday's paper – sorry 'bout that.)

By now, I've been going backward and forward in time for an hour or two. This is about the time someone asks me what day it is.

I don't know. I'm not even sure what month it is, since I've been working in both April and May. It's really confusing between December - just doing the easy parts. So working on the and January, when I also have to keep track of

what *year* I'm in.

I've always been fascinated with the idea of time travel. I just never knew it could be so important in an ordinary, everyday newspaper

We spend a lot of time thinking about the future, and making sure we help you think about it as well. Upcoming concerts, ball games, birthday parties and all the rest are things you depend on us to get the word out on. We get the past to you as well - what hap-

pened at the school board meeting or on the beat. We want to keep you in touch. But some days – some weeks – it can be a bit

dizzying to be right in the middle of the Colby Time Warp. If this doesn't sound a lot like a Monday morning thought, you're right. It's a Friday afternoon thought, and it's colored by afternoon

Have a good weekend - or by the time you read this – I hope you had a good weekend.

sunshine and tinges of Saturday garage-sales-

Marian Ballard has collected careers as counselor, librarian, pastor, and now copy editor for the Colby Free Press. She collects ideas, which are more portable than other stuff.

## Hope springs eternalon farm

Mother Nature has broken into full bloom once again, shedding her brown winter coat and replacing it with green garments of corn, soybeans and milo. With the arrival of longer days, brilliant sunshine and warmer temperatures, hope springs eternal and enthusiasm for a future harvest reaches a fever pitch.

The "Old Girl" has cooperated this spring, and Kansas farmers had been logging long hours in their fields preparing for next fall's

Looking at the three major fall crops, 32 percent of the corn has been planted as of the end of April. This is right on target, and about 4.7-million acres of corn will be planted. That amounts to a 15 percent increase in corn acreage from a year ago.

Kansas farmers began planting soybeans the last week of April and will continue through the first couple weeks of May. Projected planting acres total 4.1 million. That figure is up 11 percent from last year.

Generally, grain sorghum goes into the Kansas soil last. Farmers usually start planting during the first week of May. About 1 percent is planted and 2.7 million acres are projected across Kansas. This is the same as last year.

April and May are busy months across the Sunflower State. Red and green tractors, some sporting large egg-shaped saddle tanks, are rolling across the Kansas countryside. Filled



#### John Schlageck Insights

Kansas Farm Bureau

with herbicides or crop protectants, these tanks slowly empty so corn, milo and soybeans can grow without competition from weeds.

Insecticides will be applied in fields from southeastern Kansas to the far northwest, protecting fields of corn, milo and beans. Farmers apply these crop protectants to control nibbling critters in an attempt to raise yields at harvest.

Today's farmers take seriously safe use and application of herbicides and pesticides. To apply these crop protectants, they must attend classes and pass tests to become certified applicators.

Farmers work with crop consultants and Extension specialists when applying herbicides, insecticides and fertilizers. They've cut the amounts used in recent years.

With the price of these "agricultural inputs," they cannot afford to put on more than needed. Some farmers believe they have cut chemical usage by nearly 40 percent in the last decade. Farmers work diligently to safely apply

pesticides within guidelines set by the federal government and manufacturers. Unfortunately, they are sometimes blamed or singled out as the cause of pollution, especially in our state's waterways.

Without question, pesticides must be tested. It is important to update registrations to ensure their effectiveness and safety. New regulations should take into consideration the needs of the people who handle and apply them as well as the safety of the products.

Farmers understand the use of chemicals and treat them with care. After all, they are the first ones to come in contact with them. From planting through harvest, farmers

do their best to provide nutritious, safe food. They battle weather, weeds, insects and disease. Their own efficiency is their best defense against unstable world markets, political barriers and fringe groups who attack their farming methods, yet know little about the profession.

While spring signals the arrival of life and a new beginning in farm country, Americans should always remember that this time of year also signifies the wonder that starts in the fields and finishes on the dining-room table.

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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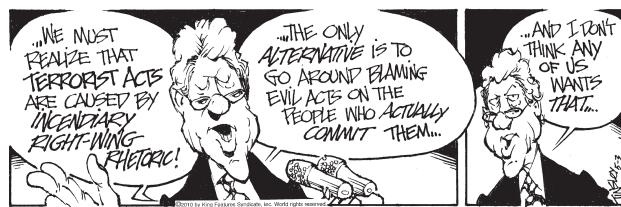
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