



College board raises fees \$3 an hour

By Kayla Cornett
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The Colby Community College trustees decided Monday to raise student general fees \$3 per semester hour for the next school year to shore up the budget.

President Stephen Vacik said the administrative team did a lot of soul searching about this issue and met at least three times to come up with a solution for a challenging cash-flow

problem.

"We certainly would like to keep our costs as low as we can for our students," Vacik said, "but the reality is we also know that funding is going to be challenging again this year. There won't be any additional monies, and even with basically level funding for next year, we budget the same way as we did this year.

"We're going to be hard-pressed to stay ahead, given the rising costs of things like gasoline, for instance."

He said the team proposed raising general

fees instead of tuition. Vacik said these fees have not been raised in five years, and raising them will allow the college to do more with its infrastructure.

Vacik said the college should generate about \$100,000 from this increase, which would bring general fees from \$25 to \$28. So, he said, students would pay, per semester hour, \$58 for tuition, \$28 for general fees and \$10 for a technology fee which everyone pays except for outreach and concurrent students.

Arlen Leiker, board vice chair and treasurer,

asked how much the college will receive from the state per credit hour next year. Alan Waites, vice president of business affairs and chief financial officer, said they don't have those figures yet, but last year it got about \$72 for Kansas residents.

Trustee Nick Wells asked if they know what other colleges are doing, and Dr. Keegan Nichols, vice president of student affairs and marketing, said most of them are raising either tuition

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Steve Vacik

Thanks, Guv

Brownback flies out to sign water bill here

Students, officials watch act

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Gov. Sam Brownback arrived in Colby on Tuesday for the ceremonial signing of a water conservation bill and to discuss the progress that has been made to conserve and protect the Ogallala Aquifer, on which much of the High Plains region depends.

The bill establishes a process through groundwater management districts that allows farmers and other water users in designated areas to decide their future by initiating conservation plans that meet their goals – and the state's.

At the signing at the Colby Community College farm east of town, Brownback spoke to a group comprising college staff and students, city officials and citizens about overuse of the aquifer.

"We've gone too fast on the use of it and we're not keeping it for our kids and our grandkids," he said, "and we've got to do better."

Brownback said this law gives Kansas the tools to maintain its rural economy, continue economic activity and still reduce its use of the aquifer.

He said that he believes sustainability has both environmental and economic value because the aquifer affects farmers that use the water to grow crops and make money.

"This is an incredible resource," Brownback said. "It's one of the most incredible resources in America ... some of the purest water that Coors ever dreamed of."

However, he said, it's a limited resource and the water table has been falling too fast, even though it's not down in all areas and not uniformly.

He said the effort to conserve and extend the aquifer was started years ago, but it's being harvested now with this bill.

Brownback then talked about another recent effort toward this goal, his signing of a bill about a month ago easing the "Use It or Lose It" water policy in areas



Gov. Sam Brownback (above) spoke at the Colby Community College farm Tuesday about the importance of a water bill he signed earlier this month, Senate Bill 310, which should help conserve and extend the life of the Ogallala Aquifer. Behind him were (from left) Wayne Bossert, manager of Groundwater Management District No. 4; Director Tracy Streater of the Kansas Water Office; Dave Barfield, chief engineer for the state Division of Water Resources; state Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer; Dr. Stephen Vacik, college president; state Rep. Rick Billinger of Goodland; and college students. After his speech, Brownback (left) did a ceremonial signing of the bill with students gathered to watch. Bossert (below), flanked by Streater and Ostmeyer, talked about how the bill will help farmers work together to conserve water from the aquifer.

SHARON FRIEDLANDER/Colby Free Press



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State inmates escape county jail

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) – State and local law enforcement officers were looking for three violent offenders who escaped from a north-central Kansas jail, including one serving time for murder.

The Kansas Highway Patrol says four men escaped around 4:45 a.m. Wednesday from the Ottawa County Jail in Minneapolis, but one was caught soon after.

The other three remained at large this morning, prompting the North Ottawa County School Dis-

trict here to call off classes for the day. The escapees are identified as 22-year-old Santos Carrera, serving time for first-degree murder in Sedgwick County; 22-year-old Eric James, convicted of aggravated robbery, burglary and kidnapping; and 21-year-old Drew Wade, convicted on robbery and aggravated battery charges.

A Department of Correction official says the men were transferred from Ellsworth in January because of overcrowding at the state prison there.

Officials debate road request

By Christina Beringer
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Board members and people representing two farming operations in Morgan Township attended Monday's Thomas County Commission meeting to follow-up on a request for the county to assume maintenance of a four-mile stretch

of County Road O. Dean Schielke told commissioners last Monday that the road, running east and west between K-25 and County Road 15, is in terrible condition. He said it is supposed to be maintained by the township board.

Six other individuals added to Schielke's complaint this week, saying that the first mile is usually

in good condition, but then the road gets dangerous and sometimes can damage trucks.

"The third mile is the biggest problem," said Bob Wagoner.

Township board members Ron

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