

Fort Hays increases enrollment

By Rachel Hixson
The Goodland Daily News
Fort Hays State University took a different approach when money for higher education was cut last year, and wound up with more students enrolled this fall semester than ever before.

President Ed Hammond said while most universities in Kansas responded to state budget cuts by hiking tuition between 9 and 25 percent, Fort Hays administrators decided a better solution was keep tuition low and bring in more students. He said the result was a 13.6 percent increase in enrollment 20 days into the 2002 fall semester over enrollment at the same time last year. That includes a 60.6 percent enrollment increase in the university's virtual college program, through which students can earn a degree at home, and a 1.2 percent increase on campus.

The total head count on Oct. 20 was 6,392 students, Hammond said, which is 766 more than were counted last year and the highest enrollment Fort Hays has ever seen. Virtual college enrollment increased 713 students to 1,890 and on-campus enrollment went up 53 students to 4,502. "We have growth across the board,"



Hammond

said Hammond, who recently stopped in Goodland on his annual tour of the state.

He said administrators realized about 18 months ago that the university was facing hard times as the state's economy was growing weaker. They could either raise tuition to cover budget cuts, he said, or find some other solution.

Hammond said they did a little of both, increasing tuition 6.4 percent and deciding to boost enrollment at least 10 percent each year for three years.

"We decided we needed \$500,000 more to cover budget cuts of last July and August," he said. "We took a chance on keeping tuition low and starting to grow."

The tuition increase was minor, Hammond said, compared to Kansas State University's hike of 25.2 percent and the University of Kansas' 25.1 percent increase. All the universities under the Kansas Board of Regents increased tuition more than Fort Hays, he said.

Keeping tuition low was one of the keys to increasing enrollment, Hammond said, noting that students seem to have realized they could get a good education at a lower price.

"They thought, 'Why not go to that institution where you don't have to cut off an arm and a leg to get there on the cost side?'" he said.

Hammond said Fort Hays started a promotion called "Affordable Success" to show students they don't have to pay more to attend a reputable school.

He said they're letting people know about Fort Hays students who won national contests last year, besting students from Stanford, Northwestern and other large universities.

The increase in virtual college enrollment has to do with affordability and credibility, Hammond said. He said the Fort Hays program is the only one in the country that offers help from a live person 24 hours a day.

Hammond said more students are coming to Hays from the eastern part of Kansas and from Nebraska and Colorado.

"They've realized what a tremendously good education you can get at Fort Hays," he said.

Hammond said the university will continue to work on growth, and with Democrat Kathleen Sebelius in the governor's office, they might not have to worry about more deep state budget cuts.

"She's a little more of a friend to higher education," he said.

Preparing to open



Workers installed a roof and swept the sidewalk in front of the new Taco John's building on K-27 this morning. There was more work going on inside the new fast-food restaurant, which is scheduled to open this month.
Photo by Rachel Hixson/The Goodland Daily News

Drought, farm changes killing birds

HUNTING, from Page 1

changes in farming practices the birds can no longer survive in this environment. Young pheasants don't have enough water, food and cover to stay alive until hunting season starts, he said.

This summer's drought, which left Sherman County about 9 inches below the normal rainfall level, killed off many pheasants, Hopper said.

"If the birds don't have moisture," he said, "they just don't grow, they die."

Technology has allowed farmers to become more productive and efficient, Hopper said, but it has also re-

duced the amount of bugs and weeds in fields — things pheasants need to survive.

"The loss of habitat is a big factor in the decline," he said, adding that pheasants used to live in the high grass that grew in ditches next to roads, but now those ditches are mowed.

To increase the bird population, Hopper said, farmers, landowners and others will have to commit to preserving the pheasants' habitat.

"The short and sweet of it is if we don't provide living places, water, food and nesting places we can't expect them to survive," he said.

Hopper said game wardens know the pheasant population is down be-

cause they take wildlife surveys twice a year which give them a pretty good idea of the number of pheasants in the area.

Sometime in April or May, he said, northwest Kansas game wardens will go out before sunrise and listen for pheasants crowing along a designated route for a designated amount of time. In August or September, he said, they will go out again and count the number of roosters, hens and chicks they spot in a set area during a set amount of time.

The data is compiled, Hopper said, and compared with previous years' survey results.

"Through many years of recording

data," he said, "we can tell whether or not the population is up or down."

Hopper said he talks with mail carriers, farmers and other people who spend a lot of time outside to find out how many pheasants they see.

Hunters find out the bird population is down by calling game wardens and reading hunting magazines, Hopper said.

He said when an out-of-town hunter calls him to ask about the pheasant numbers, he can't lie.

"When I get a phone call from a non-resident," he said, "I tell them the truth. 'Are there birds here? There are some but not a lot. Is it worth while to come here and hunt? I wouldn't.'"

Butler County closer to starting wind farm

EL DORADO (AP) — Butler County is one step closer to bringing electricity-generating windmills to southeast Kansas.

Early Wednesday the county's planning commission approved a proposal by Kansas Wind Power LLC for a 6,000-acre wind farm it wants to build about 3 1/2 miles south of Leon.

About 75 people waited late into the night Tuesday for the commission to discuss and vote on the proposal. Then, for more than two hours, county officials heard from residents who support and oppose the project, as well as from representatives of Kansas Wind Power LLC.

The farm would include between 50 and 80 turbines, 262 feet tall, to be built on privately owned land. They would generate enough energy to power between 50,000 and 75,000 homes a year, said Kansas Wind Power chief executive Troy Helming.

Tension increased as the meeting continued. At 11:30 p.m., Helming told commissioners, "This site needs to be approved, and it needs to be approved tonight."

Two motions to table the discussion for at least a month failed. The planning commissioners then voted 4-3 to approve the proposal, which goes to the county commission on Nov. 26.

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