Wichita State professors criticize academic report

BY MIA HENNEN

Several Wichita State faculty worry a recent study could be used to justify cutting programs, firing professors and watering down degree programs.

A decision by the Kansas Board of Regents this week is expected to shed light on whether those worries are justified.

Rpk, a higher education consulting firm hired by KBOR nine months ago, placed 8% of Wichita State's degree programs on the chopping block, identifying them as operating below an 'optimal' level.

The rpk study takes a business approach to higher education by measuring the success of programs based on credit hours generated and degrees awarded, which does not always capture the quality of instruction or other details. The report also docked points from programs that are affiliated or multiple universities, such as history, journalism and physics, considering them duplicative.

“These kinds of reports oftentimes are useful for negative things,” John Dreifort, history professor, said. “If we want to cut something, we can find something in that report to justify it.”

Faculty are on edge this year after KBOR allowed Emporia State University to cut programs, like history, journalism and physics, considering them duplicative.

Regents have not said what they plan to do with the rpk report. At the regents’ next meeting on March 22, they plan to decide the next steps. KBOR did not respond to The Sunflower's request for an interview in February.

Some faculty said that if programs were eliminated, it would hurt the entire university.

“You just can’t take out one piece of what’s going on at the university,” Dreifort said. “It affects a lot of other programs, cultural events and community organizations throughout this whole south central Kansas area, as well as the state.”

WICHITA STATE IS DIFFERENT, PROFESSORS SAY

As part of the rpk report, the consulting firm focused its study from 2017-2021 and compared the nego’s six universities, Emporia State, Fort Hays State, Kansas State, Pittsburg State, the University of Kansas and Wichita State University.

According to KBOR’s website, they funded the study to make sure that academic programs “align with Kansas’ goals for the state’s higher education enterprise, meet student expectations for programs centered on student success and recruiting their employability and efficiently deliver faculty and staff resources across each institution, division, and department.”

In the report, rpk ranked bachelor’s, master’s and doctorial programs at three different levels: “review and monitor,” “maintain, optimize” or “terminate.”

“Review and monitor” sits at the bottom of the list, meaning the programs that fall in this category show low degree production, a decline in student headcount or a headcount below the institutional median. “Optimize” degree programs show one or a combination of these negative traits.

For program review, rpk evaluated data on the number of students that had declared a major, as well as how many degrees were produced within a program at each university.

For teacher workload, rpk looked at student credit hours generated by instructors.

Credit hours translate to tuition dollars for the university system, but faculty members say that measuring the university’s worth through credit hours fails to account for the other important work at a university, such as research, advising, counseling, public and community service, and other scholarly endeavors.

“That sort of simple comparison doesn’t capture what universities do and how they interact with their students and the community,” George Dehner, associate history professor, said. “And it doesn’t capture what the faculty do.”

Not every faculty member teaches the same amount. Some courses, like those taught in lecture halls, generate a high number of students and — as a result — credit hours. Tests in these types of classes are often multiple-choice or completed online, making grading much quicker than in classes with essay assignments. Other subjects require more detailed grading.

Some faculty members, like department chairs, receive “course relief,” meaning they teach less to fulfill other duties.

“If your metric is the number of credit hours that faculty members produce,” Dehner said. “Well, then, you’re missing what that individual is contributing to the university, to the department, and to students, by serving as a faculty chair for the departments.”

Dehner also questioned whether it’s fair to compare faculty members at different universities.

“The concept of rpk is that we can compare faculty at KU at Fort Hays State (and) at Wichita State by the same metric, without recognizing that we were completely different constituencies,” he said.

Wichita State is an urban-serving research university, meaning one of its main goals is to improve the city and community through research.

“We’re a university in a city with lots of industry,” physics professor Nicholas Sokolov said. “It makes sense to have a university that has almost every degree you could want in a city where people are working full time.”

These kinds of reports, oftentimes, are useful for negative things. If we want to cut something, we can find something in that report to justify it.

JOHN DREIFORT

Wichita State University
New general education plan in works

BY MIA HENNEN
news@thesunflower.com

Nearly a month after being proposed, Wichita State’s Faculty Senate has approved a new general education plan for students. The vote was 9-1.

The Kansas Board of Regents, the governing board for higher education in Kansas, created the plan in hopes of making transferring from one Kansas school to another easier.

Each university’s Faculty Senate was tasked with reviewing the “Systemwide General Education” program and making recommendations to the Kansas Board of Regents. The new plan will clip general education credit hour requirements by one or two hours, going from 36 to 34-35.

Two Hands Corn Dogs doesn’t have a specific opening date, but co-owner Tony Pham hopes to be open by late spring. The corn dogs will offer flour, corny crinkle fries, potato dogs, and others. It will also serve signature beverages and milkshakes.

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How the Kansas House of Representatives voted on the Fairness in Women’s Sports Act

A bill禁止transgender student athletes from participating on the same teams as females. The bill passed in the Kansas House of Representatives on March 1, as HB 2238. The bill would require students to participate on the team that aligns with their gender identity. The NCAA allows transgender student athletes to play on the team that aligns with their gender identity.

The widely accepted number of all intersex individuals is anywhere from 1-2%, which equates to 78-156 million people. The number of people classified as intersex is anywhere from 1-2% of the global intersex population. The widely accepted number for the global intersex population means...
Softball receives first national ranking of the season

BY EMMIE BOESE
assistantsports@thesunflower.com

After a 12-3 start to the season, the softball team is ranked at No. 23 in the NCAA Top 25 Division I softball rankings.

The Shockers made history in 2021 after being ranked in the top 25 of all four major national polls for the first time in school history. This is the first national ranking the Shockers have received this season. The ranking comes after the program went undefeated at the North Texas Invitational. They beat North Texas 8-6 and 5-3 and Northwestern State 7-1 and 5-2.

Defensively, the Shockers have scored 137 runs, 84 RBIs and have collected 129 hits and 397 at bats. Defensively, they've recorded only nine fielding errors.

Right-handed pitcher Lauren Howell has received AAC Pitcher of the Week and left-handed pitcher Alex Aguilar has been named to the AAC Honor Roll. Howell's ERA so far this season is 1.35 and right handed pitcher Alex Aguilar's is 1.64. Cooper has a 3.34 ERA. The pitching staff as a whole has totaled 68 strikeouts, 74 hits and 35 runs over 12 games.

The program will play its home opener against Western Illinois at 2:15 p.m. on Feb. 4 in Wilkins Stadium. Season tickets for softball games are sold out, but individual game tickets are still available.

VanVleet among donors for weight room renovations

BY TRINITY RAMM
sports@thesunflower.com

Donations from former Wichita State men’s basketball All-American and NBA All-Star Fred VanVleet, Steve and Regine Feilmeier and Ricky and Jeanie Brotherton will fund renovations to the weight room in Charles Koch Arena.

VanVleet and the Feilmeiers are each giving $250,000 and the Brothertons are contributing $100,000 towards the project. The renovations are currently estimated to cost $1 million and will include new Shockers branded Sorinex strength equipment, performance flooring, turf and a nutrition station.

According to an email from the athletic department, Wichita State’s student athletes and performance staff “will have access to the latest innovations in sport science” following the renovations.

This follows the planned $273 million overhaul of Wilkins Stadium that began this spring, funded in large part by the Brothertons and the Linda Parke estate.

Softballnan among donors for weight room renovations

Fred VanVleet is currently a guard for the Toronto Raptors. He averages 19.4 points per game on 39% shooting. | File photo by Khanh Nguyen

Students take group selfies at the Selfie Booth during the tailgate event. Friends Adelisse, Tiffany, and Elise incorporate fun faces and poses at the booth. | Photos by Kristy Mace / The Sunflower

Dhruveer Singh playing ring toss during the tailgate event on Thursday. | Student Health Services

Teamin’ up at the tailgate

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Since the season started, a couple of players have been named American Athletic Conference Player of the Week, including outfielder Lauren Lucas and shortstop Sydney McKinnon. McKinnon has also been named to the AAC Honor Roll and has been named NFCA Player of the Week. Offensively, the Shockers have scored 137 runs, 84 RBIs and have collected 129 hits and 397 at bats. Defensively, they've recorded only nine fielding errors.

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Piper Pinnetti

Across campus, financial transactions are governed by various different banks. In the BSC, you can see both cash and card payments available. On Saturdays, customers are allowed only card payments. Gift cards are not accepted in the BSC. Although these rules are sticky to remember, they are not impossible for most students. ATM machines are located on campus to help supply some students with the cash they may need. Bank options include Fidelity, Bank of America, etc.

The only bank that is not offered in the only one I can think of that should be required is USAA. The American financial group offers financing related services to individual individuals in the military or with close relatives dedicating their service. The closest USAA to WSU is located in Texas. If the closest bank is in Texas, then why have USAA? The most common question I get when I come to banking. USAA allows their customers to access their accounts through mobile apps and the website. Everything is accessible online. When it comes to a situation resulting in a need for cash, USAA allows their customers to access other ATMs to pull money out. Additionally, they even reimburse you for the service. USAA, in my opinion, is the best bank around. They even have a website with how much money you're probably going to spend. It's not very helpful and I don't really need it. I recently was at a business gathering and they asked me how much money was in my wallet. It was not helpful and I got a little mad. I really want to buy my clay for the class but I don't have any cash or credit card. I really need to think I'm going to get an ATM card. It's not very helpful and I don't really need it. I recently was at a business gathering and they asked me how much money was in my wallet. It was not helpful and I got a little mad. I really want to buy my clay for the class but I don't have any cash or credit card. I really need to think I'm going to get an ATM card. It's not very helpful and I don't really need it. I recently was at a business gathering and they asked me how much money was in my wallet.

Another free activity is going on a walk. While it might seem simple or “boring,” it’s one of my favorite ways to relax and destress. Now that the weather's getting nicer, I'm starting to get into the perfect walking or hiking weather. Walking has both mental and physical benefits. It reduces stress and anxiety, boosts your immune system, improves your sleep routine and mood, and even lowers your blood pressure, strengthens your heart, tones your legs and abdominal muscles, and more. Even just fitting in one new thing a week to mix up your routine or take your usual comfort zone is worth it.
COMMUNITY HEALTH SESSIONS

Facts Not Fear ICT now offers interactive 1-hour workshops geared towards helping Wichitans make healthier lifestyle choices.

Students can earn a $50 gift card!

LET'S TAKE BACK OUR HEALTH!

Session Topics
- Healthy Behaviors
- Mental Health
- Health Screenings & Visits
- COVID-19 Prevention & Support

REGISTER TODAY
FACTSNOTFEARICT.COM/HEALTHSESSIONS

Want to partner with FNFICT to host a Community Health Sessions with your student organization/community group? Email marketing@factsnotfearict.com.

**Acknowledgement of Federal Assistance**
This opportunity was supported by 1 CPIM#211300-01-00 issued by the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling $4,000,000 with 100 percent funded by the Office of Minority Health/DASH/HHS. The contents are solely the responsibility of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement by, the Office of Minority Health/DASH/HHS, or the U.S. Government. For more information, please visit https://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/
The legacy lives on: Community movie screening features ‘Space Jam’ sequel

BY ALLISON CAMPBELL  |  news@thesunflower.com

The ‘grizzly’ truth behind ‘Cocaine Bear’

BY SASCHA HARVEY  |  news@thesunflower.com

-paramore released their long awaited album. “This Is Why” on Feb. 10 and I’ve got to say, it’s reliable.
-It’s been six years sinceParamore last released a studio album with their previous album being “After Laughter,” which was released after lead singer, Hayley Williams, went through a divorce with her husband, and New Found Glory bassist, Chad Gilbert. Within those six years, Williams released two solo studio albums, focused on her hair dye company, Good Dye Young, and Paste magazine took a long hiatus and released the title track of their new album, “This Is Why.”
-This album is more than what I expected it to be.
-When the song “This Is Why” finished, I immediately stood up and realized that the album would have an indie rock feel and did not meet my expectations. But, the album also has a lot more slow songs than their previous albums, which I like because it makes for a chill atmosphere. I like to use that way of exploring with different sounds and styles.
-Now, this album is reliable mainly because of the first three songs of the album, the title track, “This Is Why,” “The News,” and their latest single, “Running Out of Time.”

-“This Is Why” talks about why Williams never left the house with many, many negative events happening every day and “Running Out of Time” asks about how we intend to do something, but we end up never getting to it because of so much going on in media every day.
-This was a great album overall, I do wish we had a way to think about this. I think it’s great to see Paramore branching out to never sounds instead of sticking with the same sound all the time.

The ‘grizzly’ truth behind ‘Cocaine Bear’

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Students head to Food Varsity Sports Grill & Lanes while watching the 2023 “Space Jam” film. | Photo by Brianna Cook / The Sunflower

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Hypnotist Chris Jones dazzles skeptics and believers alike

BY MALEAH EVANS
maleah.evans04@gmail.com

What started as a side hobby in college turned into a profession for hypnotist Chris Jones, giving him the opportunity score his skills on shows with Penn and Teller, “America’s Got Talent” and “The Steve Harvey Show.” Wichita State students found themselves mesmerized and hypnotized by Jones on Friday.

Before the show, I thought myself somewhat skeptical. I believed that I could be hypnotized but was skeptical of the solidity, especially with the performance factor.

I was soon proven wrong, when Chris Jones summoned his cadre through several Wichita State students.

Jones was able to convince a singular reader that he was singer Ed Sheeran performing a concert for his biggest fans. The student thought he was watching “Perfect” without an ounce of shame in his body. Jones even convinced six others, including fiancé Sheeran, that they were superheroes and had them showcase their powers. Powers varied across the team – one had laser eyes, another special positive vibes, someone was invisible.

Aside from the hypnosis, Jones did a wonderful job with crowd chemistry. He had well-timed jokes and offered a family friendly show for audience members.

“I wish I had more courage to try hypnotism as a whole, but I think it would have to be for the audience,” Jones said. I was soon proven wrong, when Chris Jones summoned his cadre through several Wichita State students.

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Chris Jones asks hypnotized graduate student and WASU hypnotist to look like the superhero character Chaylack yells into the mic the name “Frajah,” a superhero who spreads positivity. | Photo by Kristy Maze / The Sunflower

Chris Jones put all hypnotized participants to sleep before starting the next bit at Friday night’s event. Leonidah Chepkoech leans onto the shoulder of the participant next to her, who also leaned onto the shoulder of Paige Harrington. | Photo by Kristy Maze / The Sunflower

Hypnotized Paige Harrington holds the pose of her character McKenna, a superhero that has laser eyes. | Photo by Kristy Maze / The Sunflower

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