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Woman Files Claim Against Neb. School District

COLUMBUS, Neb. (AP) — A Columbus woman has filed a \$650,000 claim against Columbus Public Schools over an alleged attack on her son. The claim cited by the *Columbus Telegram* says a school employee provided lax supervision as her now-16-year-old son was physically attacked while attending a wrestling camp in Denver in 2009. The claim says the teen's head was dunked into a toilet filled with feces, among other things. Rumors of hazing after the trip contributed to the resignation of wrestling coach Tracy Dodson and the suspension of four wrestlers. Superintendent Troy Loeffelholz says the claim was forward to the district's insurance carrier, which will decide whether to pay the woman. If no payment is authorized, she can sue the district.

Report Of Cougar Sighting At Neb. Golf Course

KEARNEY, Neb. (AP) — A cougar has been sighted in Kearney but authorities have been unable to locate the animal. The *Kearney Hub* reports a golfer at Meadowlark Golf Course told police he spotted a cougar running across the course near the clubhouse about 1 p.m. Saturday. Nick Fryda with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission says the ground in the area was dry, so he couldn't find the animal's tracks. There have been several reports in recent weeks of cougar sightings in nearby York and Hall counties. Cougars, which also are called mountain lions or pumas, have turned up as far east in Nebraska as Omaha.

Water At Neb.'s Johnson Lake To Be Lowered

LEXINGTON, Neb. (AP) — The water level at Johnson County lake south of Lexington will be lowered for a maintenance project. KNOP-TV reports that the Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District needs to lower the water after Labor Day weekend to replace a circuit breaker and related measures at the hydroelectric plant at the lake. The district says the water level will begin to drop Sept. 6 and should be down about 3 feet by Sept. 26. This allows water to be diverted around the plant. Water levels will return to normal after the project is complete.

No Foul Play Suspected In Burned Body In Neb.

LOUISVILLE, Neb. (AP) — Authorities say no foul play is suspected in the death of a man whose charred remains were found in a burned pickup on Venell's Island. Sarpy County sheriff's deputies discovered the body Saturday morning in the truck found stuck in the sand near the Platte River. The vehicle had been badly burned. Authorities believe they know the victim's name but are awaiting an autopsy to confirm his identity.

Tax Value Set For Oil Pipeline In Eastern Neb.

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — A portion of the Keystone pipeline that went into operation last year in eastern Nebraska has been valued at more than \$145 million for tax purposes. The *Lincoln Journal Star* reports the tax valuation was set this month by the state's Property Assessment Division. The first payments will be due May 1, 2012, although actual payments due to each county have yet to be determined. The portion of the pipeline that runs through Butler County, along with a pump station there, are valued at about \$19 million. County assessor Vickie Donoghue says the tax on that will be "a shot in the arm" for local finances but stresses it shouldn't translate into a spending free-for-all. This portion of TransCanada's pipeline enters Nebraska at Cedar County and exits at Gage.

Missing Neb. Girl Found With Mom In New Mexico

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — A 2-year-old girl taken from her foster home has been found in New Mexico. Lincoln police told the *Journal Star* that the girl was taken Friday by her biological mother during a supervised visit. She was found Saturday in Las Cruces, N.M., and placed in protective custody until her foster parents can pick her up. Police say the 24-year-old mother was arrested at a home of a family member in Las Cruces. She's being held Sunday in the Dona Ana County jail. A hearing is set for Friday to determine whether the girl's biological parents should still have parental rights.

Sioux Falls Wants More Money For Snow Removal

SIoux FALLS (AP) — City officials are asking the Sioux Falls City Council for an additional \$3 million next year for snow removal. Officials say more money is needed to pay for higher fuel prices and because funds allotted for snow removal and street maintenance this year is running out. The *Argus Leader* reports that the city only budgeted for four snow events in 2011 but those already happened earlier in the year. Public works director Mark Cottler says the street department is asking for \$14.2 million next year to cover six snow events. That's \$3 million more than this year.

Lightning Sparks Blaze In Black Hills Nat. Forest

RAPID CITY (AP) — Firefighting crews from the U.S. Forest Service and the National Park Service responded to a fire Saturday south of Elk Mountain in the Black Hills National Forest. The *Rapid City Journal* reports that Sheep Wagon Fire, about 22 miles west of Custer, was started by lightning and has grown to about 40 acres. It is close to the Barrel Fire, which burned earlier this year. Authorities say the previously burned area will help serve as a barrier to keep the new fire from spreading.

S.D. Man Accused Of Selling Mortgaged Cattle

RAPID CITY (AP) — A Ludlow rancher accused of selling mortgaged cattle has pleaded not guilty in federal court. The *Rapid City Journal* reports that 32-year-old Allen Shane Smith is accused of keeping the money he received from the sale of cattle that were mortgaged through the Farm Service Agency when he sold the livestock in January. Smith is free on bond, pending a trial scheduled for October.

Tuition, Fee Hikes Raise Transparency Questions

BY STEVE YOUNG
Associated Press

SIoux FALLS — Anthony Sutton doesn't hesitate when asked how much more he will pay this year to attend South Dakota State University.

"Six-point-nine percent, or roughly \$500 more if a student takes 32 credit hours a year," the 22-year-old political science and history major from Flandreau said.

So his part of the burden in making up a 10 percent cut in state funding to higher education is a 6.9 percent hike in tuition, Sutton was asked again?

"Yes," he replied. Well, not quite.

While the overall bump in tuition and fees for students attending one of the state's six public universities does amount to 6.9 percent, the increase in the tuition portion actually is 14.5 percent — from \$99.80 a credit hour to \$114.30.

And last school year, when the Board of Regents set a 4.6 percent increase in tuition and fees, the tuition portion actually went up 8.8 percent.

"Really?" Sutton said. "I would say that surprises me a little bit."

It shouldn't, higher education officials say, insisting that the regents have been up-front about framing the hike in terms of "tuition and fees."

About 50 percent of the student's cost for higher education is tuition, said Jack Warner, executive director of the Board of Regents.

The other half involves two mandatory fees every student pays on every campus — the university support fee that helps to cover operational expenses, and the general activity fee that gets students into university functions and helps to pay for things such as wellness centers. Those fees went up about 1 percent this year, except at Northern State University, where students are paying a little more to help remodel their union.

The 50-50 split differs from most other states, where tuition typically accounts for 80 percent or more of student bills. Warner couldn't explain the difference here but said the higher increase in tuition across South Dakota the past few years reflects an effort to move South Dakota closer to the national norm.

In any event, he said, there is nothing misleading about casting the increase as a combination of tuition and fees.

"It is not false advertising," he said. "It is tuition and mandatory fees; that is absolutely true. We report the total bottom line increase in the student's tuition-and-fee bill."

Still, others suggest there could be greater clarity in reporting specific increases.

"At the end of the day, when I look at the dollars and cents I pay this year versus last year, it's going to be about 7 percent," Sutton said. "Still, I do think it's good to have all the information out there so we can see it and have some conversations about it, whether with (regents) or state legislators."

Zach Anderson, a junior this year in computer science at Dakota State University, said it is an issue of transparency.

"I just assume my costs are going up," the Britton native said. "But you would come off as sounding more honest if you were upfront about it. And there would be less apprehension for those paying attention when they look and see their tuition is going up 14.5 percent."

Legislator: "Probably a good marketing tool" State Sen. Larry Tidemann, R-Brookings, said he sees nothing misleading in the way the increases are presented.

"I don't think it's lying," said Tidemann, former head of Cooperative Extension at SDSU and vice chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee. "It's probably a good marketing tool on (the regents') behalf. I think it's like, 'What can we sell to the public?' Six-point-nine percent sounds better than 14.5 percent."

Still, SDSU President David Chicoine said he understands how some might raise an eyebrow when they see tuition up 14.5 percent, especially if they don't understand the whole story.

"We get it" at SDSU, Chicoine said of potential concerns. "We're not always very transparent, and we're not very simple either when it comes to our pricing structure."

To address that, SDSU is putting up information on a website that spells semester by semester, for each major, what students should pay.

"We can predict costs," Chicoine said. "We cannot predict the outcome of the decision-making process. We have to seek permission" through policy processes in Pierre to institute certain cost increases.

To the extent that SDSU and the other public universities can bring in dollars through fees charged for specific majors, they are doing that this year — sometimes in dramatic fashion.

For example, engineering students at SDSU and the School of Mines and Technology in Rapid City are paying fees that amount to \$62.40 per credit hour of engineering classes, compared to \$20.40 a credit hour last school year.

Pharmacy majors in their fourth and fifth years at SDSU are going from fees of \$115.10 per pharmacy credit hour to \$177.50. And dairy science majors are paying \$75 per credit hour for courses specific to their major compared to no such fee a year ago.

Had there not been cuts to the Agriculture Experiment Station at SDSU, which previously had helped pay for cow herds and other livestock herds used in instructional programs, "we probably would have been able to keep those discipline fees at a lower level," Chicoine said.

But livestock costs money. Lab equipment for engineers and instructors to work with nursing students cost money.

Those higher fees now shouldn't be raising any eyebrows, SDSU Provost Laurie Nichols said. They're needed to maintain accreditation standards, proper laboratories and course quality.

"For those students returning this year, the colleges have been very transparent with them," Nichols said. "We had college-level meetings and sent out communications to those students. The deans posted the information on the website. There shouldn't be anyone coming back surprised by this if they paid any attention at all."

But there will be many students who paid no attention, said Mark York, student association president at SDSU and a math and agronomy major. And there might be some surprise among those students, he said.

Still, many of them understand, as he does, that the price of an education at South Dakota's public universities remains lower than in many other states.

For that reason, and for the quality of the education he said he is receiving, he's all right with whatever the actual dollar increases are.

"I would rather have tuition raised and keep the same quality of education than have it stay the same and lose that quality," York said. "It would be nice if the state funded it the way it has in the past. But I'm all right with paying more money if it helps to keep my quality of education."

New Designs For Old State Fair Building

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — A redevelopment plan for the Industrial Arts Building on the former state fairgrounds in Lincoln could breathe some new life into the old structure.

Utah-based Woodbury Co. has been chosen to oversee the first phase of construction at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's research and technology park, which is being developed from what used to be State Fair Park before the fair moved to Grand Island.

Zach Wiegert, a developer with Nebraska Nova, a division of Woodbury, told the *Lincoln Journal Star* that a few designs have been proposed for the Industrial Arts Building. They include office and research space and a spot for a greenhouse. He said he's been

meeting with potential tenants as well.

"The building needs a lot of work, but it's a process worth going through," Wiegert said.

"There's a special attachment to that building for a lot of people. There's a lot of interest."

But, he said, any development is at least six months away.

The university has permission from the board of regents to tear down the building. Doing so would make more room available in the research and technology park.



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