Best return on investment: Study finds Kansas State University is top value in Kansas

For the third year in a row, a national study finds Kansas State University is the best education value in Kansas.

K-State again tops SmartAsset's study of which schools provide the best bang for the education buck in the Sunflower State. The study measures tuition, living costs, average scholarships and grants, starting salary upon graduation and retention rates at 10 Kansas schools to determine its best value schools. SmartAsset is a financial data and technology company.

Among the factors keeping K-State at the top of the list include having the highest average starting salary for new graduates and the highest student retention rate in the state - both by wide margins over other Kansas schools.

"K-State students and our graduates are directly benefiting from a remarkable return on their investment," said Pat Bosco, vice president for student life and dean of students. "A high-paying job in your area of interest - and most often in the state of Kansas - is the immediate goal of many of the students we serve. Students, family members and employers - everybody wins by choosing to attend K-State and by hiring K-Staters."

The average starting salary for a new K-State graduate is $48,300, which is up $400 from last year's study and is $1,400 higher than the average for a new graduate of the University of Kansas, the second-place school in this category. K-State's student retention rate of 83 percent was 3 percent higher than second-place KU's.

Kansas net farm income rebounds somewhat, but ag economy continues to slump

Kansas average net farm income rebounded somewhat last year to $43,161 from a dismal stretch the previous year when income fell to $6,744 - the lowest in 30 years. The improvement in 2016 was supported by higher crop yields and a decrease in crop production input and machinery costs, according to data from the Kansas Farm Management Association's (KFMA) annual summary of member farms.

Not all Kansas farms are KFMA members, but the annual summary can be helpful in identifying trends in agriculture across the state, said Kevin Herbel, KFMA executive director. The 2016 summary information is based on member

data from 1,024 farms, including a range of operations such as dryland crop production to irrigated crop production to various types of livestock production businesses.

Prices for most commodities continued at sub-par levels in 2016, Herbel said, but above-average crop yields per acre in many areas helped lead to greater value of farm production. That, coupled with a decrease in overall crop production and machinery expenses, contributed to the rise in net income.

The KFMA data showed that crop value per acre was up 5.4 percent at $330.66 in 2016, while crop production costs per acre were down 6 percent at $246.99, and machinery costs per acre were down 8.9 percent at $86.21.

Overall farm debt levels decreased slightly on KFMA farms in 2016. This occurred as current liabilities decreased while intermediate and long-term debts increased, Herbel said, adding, "This would appear to reflect some restructuring of debt to be occurring among the KFMA farms following a period of substantial increases to current liabilities in recent years."

As is the case every year, the average net farm income varied sharply from one region of the state to another. In 2016, southeast Kansas farms fared better than in other areas, with average net farm income of $109,344. Northeast Kansas income averaged $48,197, southwest at $39,615 and north-central at $34,205. Net income for farms in northwest Kansas averaged $389 and south-central farms averaged a loss of $5,352.

Even with outcomes in 2016 better than a year earlier overall, the agricultural economy is still in a slump, Herbel said, adding that it is important to note that 35 percent of the KFMA farms recorded a net loss for the year, with much variation in revenue and cost structure between farms.

The complete KFMA report is available online at www.agmanager.info/kfma/.

Kansas State University Polytechnic Campus approved to conduct UAS flight operations at night

The Kansas State University Polytechnic Campus is expanding its unmanned aircraft systems capabilities to now include flight operations after dark.

Kansas State Polytechnic's Applied Aviation Research Center, which houses the unmanned aircraft systems research program, has received approval from the Federal Aviation Administration to conduct UAS flights at night. It was granted a special
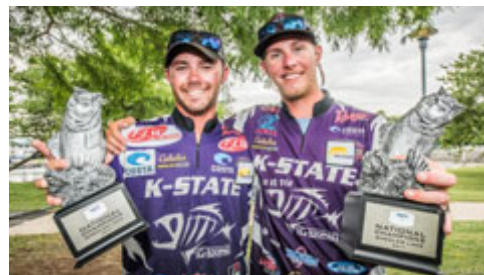
Wildcats reel in third bass fishing national championship

Travis Blenn, senior in park management and conservation, and Kyle Alsop, a December 2016 graduate in mechanical engineering, brought home first place at the YETI FLW College Fishing National Championship on Alabama's Lake Wheeler.

The team's three-day total of 44 pounds, 12 ounces - including an 11-pound, 11-ounce bag on the final day of competition - secured their first-place finish.

Alsop's and Blenn's win is the third national championship in five years for the K-State bass team.

waiver because flying unmanned aircraft after the sun sets is currently not permitted under the FAA's Part 107 rule - the regulatory framework for civil and commercial small UAS operations. In addition to the campus's research sector, the night flight waiver will be utilized in commercial flight training courses and in forthcoming curriculum in the UAS degree option.

"Having the ability to fly unmanned aircraft at night is a significant asset to our program, adding another layer to the state-of-the-art training we provide industry partners and students and allowing us to retain our status as a leader in applied UAS research," said Kurt Carraway, UAS executive director of the Applied Aviation Research Center.

State's largest engineering college adds bachelor's degree in biomedical engineering

The College of Engineering at Kansas State University, with recent approval from the Kansas Board of Regents, will add biomedical engineering as its 11th Bachelor of Science degree program.

Offered through the electrical and computer engineering department, the curriculum of 133 credit hours will be officially available in fall 2018.

Biomedical engineering applies engineering principles to design challenges faced by the medical and life science communities.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the job outlook for biomedical engineering is projected to grow nationally by more than 20 percent from 2014 to 2024, with biomedical companies in the Midwest representing a significant portion of that growth.

"We are pleased and excited to add the biomedical engineering degree to our program offerings," said Darren Dawson, dean of the College of Engineering. "As the largest engineering program in the state of Kansas, it is our continuous goal to ensure our educational product is relevant and at the forefront of society's needs."

The College of Engineering will seek accreditation by

Alsop also was a member of last year's Bassmaster College Series National Championship-winning team, and a member of K-State's team that won a national title in 2012.

Nearly $1 million grant to help university researchers develop prediction models for determining best new winter wheat varieties

A nationally funded project by K-State wheat researchers could help determine more quickly which new candidate varieties of wheat will produce superior yields and baking quality.

A team of wheat breeders and geneticists at the university has received a nearly $1 million grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and the Kansas Wheat Commission for "An Integrated Omics Approach to Accelerating Wheat Quality Improvement."

"New DNA sequencing technology has enabled the determination of genetic differences between candidate wheat varieties as well as the development of genomic prediction models for important traits such as milling and baking," said Jesse Poland, research team leader and associate professor of plant pathology. "These prediction models can then be used for selection of superior candidate varieties."

To speed up the process of determining which new varieties of winter wheat are best, Poland's research team will take an integrated approach to develop profiles on each breed's genomics and other "omics": proteomics for proteins; metabolomics for metabolites; and ionomics for minerals. These factors will be evaluated as determinates of wheat quality, and the information will be combined to develop improved models for yield and quality.

For the project, advanced breeding lines in Kansas State University's wheat program will be profiled for milling and baking quality. Proteomic, metabolomic and ionomic profiles of the parental and advanced

the Engineering Accreditation Commission of ABET for the biomedical engineering program after the first graduates of the program have completed their degrees, which is the standard ABET process for accreditation of new programs.

DID YOU KNOW?

Gary Clark, senior associate dean for the College of Engineering and professor of biological and agricultural engineering at K-State, was named the 2017 Engineer of the Year by the Kansas Society of Professional Engineers.

breeding lines, as well as genomic profiles of all breeding lines, will be generated. Then the researchers will develop, test and implement novel prediction models using the genomic profiles combined with the other "omics" data as predictor variables and phenotypes, or characteristics.

"We will test and implement the integrated models in new breeding lines to accelerate the wheat breeding process for improving quality," Poland said. "Overall, this project will lead to an increased understanding of the genetic determinants of wheat quality as well as improved selection strategies that can result in accelerating the delivery of superior varieties to wheat farmers."

f Facebook   Twitter   Website

K-State Governmental Relations Staff
Sue Peterson, Director of Governmental Relations
Kristin Holt, Assistant to the Director
Caleb Hurst, Legislative Assistant
Lacy Pitts, Legislative Assistant

Contact Information
Office of Governmental Relations
110 Anderson Hall, Manhattan, KS 66506
785-532-6227
www.ksu.edu/govrelations