Madi and Robbie Vannaman, both KU staff, show off a couple handfuls of Atomic Fireballs. The Vannamans volunteer as scoreboard operator and backup scorekeeper at basketball games, and are the originators of a tradition of handing out the candies at games.

Fireballs in the Fieldhouse

KU staff couple starts well-loved, but not widely known, tradition

By Jeff Jacobsen

Tradition abounds everywhere in KU’s famed Allen Fieldhouse. There are national championship trophies on display and memorabilia everywhere. Fans fill the stands, great players take the court, home victory streaks break only the record streaks of earlier Jayhawk teams.

How is it then that a round ball of candy can hold its own in the midst of all this rich tradition? Well, meet the Atomic Fireballs – Madi and Robbie Vannaman.

Before every game, a parade of people stop at the scorer’s table to pick up an Atomic Fireball from the duo with the wonderful smiles, or Robbie delivers one of the popular treats to those that can not get to the court.

Robbie is the scoreboard operator and Madi is the backup scorekeeper handling the substitution software and possession arrow – both very important duties on game day – though they probably are known more for their gift of the hard, cinnamon-coated candy that was created in 1954.

Former assistant Neil Dougherty talks to players on the bench with an Atomic Fireball in his mouth.

Neil Dougherty was a young assistant coach for Roy Williams at KU in 1995 when he met the Vannamans and picked up his first Atomic Fireball. It didn’t take long for the astute KU student sections to realize what was making one of Dougherty’s cheeks swell throughout games. Campers that line the north hallway of Allen Fieldhouse to gain the best student seating have long used creative and funny names on the required seeding list taped to the doors. Neil Dougherty’s Atomic Fireballs was always one of the earliest groups on that list during Dougherty’s seven years at KU.

Dougherty might have been the Vannaman’s most well-known consumer, but Robbie has been Allen Fieldhouse’s favorite candy man dating back to the early 80’s. He would sit in the fieldhouse watching the Ted Owens-led Jayhawks with a Fireball in his mouth. By the late 80’s, Robbie had traded his seat in the stands for a chair along the scorer’s table back when the Jayhawks still had a junior varsity basketball team. The tradition of distributing the candy amongst game administrators and fans quickly took root and spread.

After Madi joined Robbie as a partner in both life and at the scorer’s table, the couple moved from JV games to women’s and men’s basketball games as well as football games at Memorial Stadium. Former football coach Terry Allen took a fireball before each game on the team’s walk down the Hill into the stadium. After Dougherty and Allen took head coaching jobs elsewhere, each received a tub of Fireballs from the couple now nicknamed the Atomic Fireballs.

The nickname fits perfectly in the sometimes unreal world of big-time college athletics, while in reality, Robbie serves as a tax analyst in General Counsel’s Office for the university and Madi works as assistant director in Human Resources and Equal Opportunity. However, neither have any intention of giving up their roles as the purveyors of sugary delight.
“For really big games we might give out 50 Fireballs,” Robbie said sitting at the officials’ table before the KU women took on Alabama. “We go through a tub of 200 in five games.”

Those tubs are purchased at Sam’s Club in Kansas City where they are picked up by the pallet. Many dedicated Fireball fans freely help keep the Fireball supply replenished.

The Vannamans admit they love to watch the reaction people have to the Fireballs. While the candy starts off sweet, the coating of cinnamon soon kicks in with a true sense of fire.

“We often see people take them out of their mouth and put them back into the wrapper to let their mouth cool off,” said Robbie, laughing. “Then we’ll see them pull the candy back out later to finish off the Fireball.”

Dougherty was joined by assistant coach Joe Holladay during the Roy Williams coaching era in requiring that any player that was injured or not dressed for a game had to have an Atomic Fireball in their mouth before the game and before the start of the second half. The reaction to the heat the candy emitted was mixed.

“For those that can’t stand the heat, we always have either a spearmint or wintergreen Life Saver,” Robbie said holding up the small bag. “We call them ‘the weenie mint’.”

Editor’s note: A full version of this story and photos, by Jeff Jacobsen, photographer for Kansas Athletics, were originally posted on his blog, jeffjacobsen.wordpress.com on Dec. 14.
Film prof makes movie star interviews available through KU ScholarWorks

Like many of us, John Tibbetts had some old videotapes he was holding on to. Instead of putting them in a box and letting them gather dust in the basement, he’s found a way to preserve and share his videos, which happen to feature his interviews with the likes of Dustin Hoffman, Meryl Streep, Christopher Reeve and Tim Burton.

Tibbetts, associate professor of film and media studies, has partnered with KU ScholarWorks to make available his archive of video and audio interviews he did with actors, directors and musicians during his career as a journalist. He was a journalist working with CBS television and various radio entities while also teaching in an adjunct role. His collection spans interviews he did from about 1980 until the last few years.

The idea was, ‘Could we have an archive of these interviews?’” Tibbetts said. “My main concern years and years ago was simply preserving them.”

The thought of sharing them for research purposes was intriguing. He then approached Debora Ludwig in KU Libraries, who put him in touch with Wade Garrison, librarian in the Center for Digital Scholarship. They’ve since digitized and uploaded nearly 100 interviews. They are all available on a site called “Over the Rainbow” at http://bit.ly/bpkQsi managed by KU ScholarWorks.

The goal is to eventually archive several hundred video and audio interviews as well as drawings and paintings Tibbetts made of the interview subjects.

The online repository is home to countless volumes of research, publications and data generated by KU faculty members and researchers. Garrison said the videos are an example of the way the service can help share new formats of data with students, scholars and the world at large.

“What KU ScholarWorks can be is not just a place for ‘traditional scholarship,’” Garrison said. “It can be a home to any sort of data file that represents a faculty member’s work.”

Because he was an educator at the time he was performing the interviews, Tibbetts said he often formed his questions with the intention of having an interview that would be suitable for classroom purposes. After asking Richard Donner about working with Mel Gibson on “Lethal Weapon 2,” he could ask technical questions about how to properly mount cameras to film a car chase.

Garrison said the materials could be of value to students and faculty in film and media studies as well as disciplines such as communication studies, American studies and journalism. Tibbetts hopes the interviews not only are valuable academically, but also culturally.

“I always tell my students ‘These materials have never been cited in film research,’” Tibbetts said. “My first dream is that these are available for scholars. Or just anybody who’s interested in seeing Jeff Bridges talk about ‘Tron’ in 1983.”
Ballard new president of National Black Caucus of State Legislators

State Rep. Barbara Ballard, a KU staff member, has been elected president of the National Black Caucus of State Legislators. The organization represents more than 50 million Americans.

Barbara Ballard

Ballard, associate director for civic programming and public outreach at the Dole Institute of Politics, was elected Dec. 3 to a two-year term at the organization’s conference in Atlanta. She was previously vice president. The nonpartisan organization includes more than 600 legislators from 45 states, the District of Columbia and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Ballard has been a member of the Kansas House of Representatives since 1992, representing Lawrence’s 44th District. She is a member of the Appropriation, Social Services Budget, Transportation and Legislative Educational Planning committees. She also serves on the House Leadership Team. She has been a member of several policy committees with the National Black Caucus of State Legislators, including the Education and Youth Committee and Higher Education Committee, and served as the rules chair.

Ballard said her primary goal as president will be “introducing and expanding on policies that are important to our constituency. Our policy resolutions are sent to the president and various entities. We will continue to meet with Congress and have our presence on Capitol Hill and the districts we represent.”

The National Black Caucus of State Legislators represents more than 50 million Americans of all ethnicities. The organization tracks legislation at state and federal levels and provides its members with information on policy initiatives. The organization regularly passes policy legislation that impacts federal and state policy.

During her time in the Kansas Legislature, Ballard has helped pass legislation leading to a comprehensive transportation plan and the provision of aging and mental health services. She was the first black member elected to the House Leadership Team and has been Democratic caucus chair for more than a decade.

Ballard has been at KU since 1980. Before serving in her current role, she was associate vice provost for student success, an associate dean and director of the Emily Taylor Women’s Resource Center.

She is joined in the Kansas Legislature by a pair of KU colleagues. Marci Francisco, senator for Kansas’ 2nd District since 2004, is a space analyst for the Center for Sustainability. Kathy Wolfe Moore, business director at KU Hospital, was recently elected representative for Kansas’ 36th District.

“It’s an honor and a privilege to serve as president of the National Black Caucus of State Legislators,” Ballard said. “I look forward to
working with my colleagues and representing Kansas through this great organization.”

Submitted/Celina and Marina Suarez

KU alums Celina and Marina Suarez are shown at a paleontological dig in Utah. A new species of dinosaur was named for the twins and former KU grad students who discovered it.

New species of dinosaur named for KU grads

Identical twin sisters with KU doctoral degrees in geology created a stir in the Department of Geology after a new species of dinosaur was named for them late last year.

In December, the Public Library of Science journal PLoS One, released a paper announcing that one of the oldest dinosaurs of its type ever identified in North America would be named for Celina Suarez and Marina Suarez, the twin geochemists who earned their doctorates at KU – “Geminiraptor suarezarum.”

The twins found the G. suarezarum bones in 2004 during a research expedition in Utah while they were master’s degree students at Temple University.

Luis Gonzalez, chair of geology, was among those recently congratulating the
twins. He described them as hard-working and great team players — known in the department for their twin-speak — “one is always finishing a sentence for the other,” he said.

Celina completed her doctorate in geology at KU in spring 2010 and will begin a postdoctoral research job at Boise State University in Idaho in February. Marina, two minutes younger than her twin, completed her doctorate at KU in fall 2009. She is the Morten K. and Jane Blaustein Post-doctoral Fellow at Johns Hopkins University’s earth and planetary sciences department. In the fall, Marina begins a tenure-track position in geology at the University of Texas-at-San Antonio.

Both are still surprised at their discovery of a new troodontid or bird-like raptor and their new distinction. Worldwide there are about 700 named dinosaurs.

“It really was a dream come true when we found the bones. I was so excited,” Melina said. “So much has happened between then and now though, that it seems like it’s been so long ago. I never thought of a dinosaur being named for us though.”

Celina agreed, “I never thought it would happen. We (and I mean all of us paleo nerds) always dream about such a thing happening, but never think it will. As kids, though, we always wanted to find a new dinosaur...again, one of those things you dream about happening. And, well, it did, so we were really excited about the find and even more thrilled that it was named after us.”

The site where the twins found the bones is now known as the “Suarez Sisters’ Quarry” and has since yielded at least two, possibly three, new dinosaur discoveries. James Kirkland, state paleontologist with the Utah Geological Survey, and the Suarez sisters believe the quarry and others nearby may be a mass mortality site – and are trying to determine what caused so many animals to die in that area.

Gonzalez credits Greg Ludvigson, Kansas Geological Survey researcher, who has worked with Kirkland, with bringing the twins to KU as doctoral students.

“Greg had met them [at a conference] and told me and Bob Goldstein, chair of the department at the time, that we needed to meet the them. We decided we wanted them here,” Gonzalez said.

This summer the twins hope to make their second trip to China to join a team researching rocks in northwest China similar in age to those found in Utah. They will join two scientists they met as doctoral students in 2006 on their first visit abroad and to China.

In 2006, Gonzalez and Ludvigson arranged to take seven KU students including one undergraduate and the twins on the NSF trip to China.

NCI designation process enters home stretch

Application due Sept. 25

When the calendar turned over to 2011, it meant employees at the KU Cancer Center entered the home stretch of their monumental push for National Cancer Institute designation.

The application is due Sept. 25.

Most of the push for NCI designation in recent years has focused on recruiting top researchers and upgrading research facilities. While those efforts continue this
year, Director Roy Jensen and his staff are spending the next nine months writing and refining the application for NCI designation. It will be approximately 1,000 pages.

Among the key dates on the road to NCI designation:

• March 10-11 – The center’s external advisory board visits.

• April 21 – Cancer center leadership visit NCI in Washington, DC. The meeting will determine if the center is still on target to apply in September.

• June – Jensen shares a draft of the application with executives from other NCI-designated cancer centers. They’ll be asked to evaluate the draft based on their own experiences with the application process. “This critical feedback will be incorporated into our grant application,” Jensen said.

• Sept. 23 – Application filed.

• Early 2012 – A team of experts chosen by NCI visit to evaluate the cancer center’s scientific research and merit.

• Summer 2012 – The center learns if it received NCI designation.

Besides the application, there’s plenty other NCI-related work to keep cancer center employees busy. Plans call for at least two more researchers to be added to the team before October. Renovations of the Wahl and Hixon facilities continue, and the center has $50 million to go on its capital campaign to reach the $92 million goal. LINK TO DANNY WELCH STORY.

Still, the written grant is the most important part of the quest for NCI designation.

“The score is heavily dependent on your written report,” Jensen said. “It’s awfully difficult to recover from a bad submission of the written part of this process.”

Numerous events scheduled for Black History Month

A full calendar of events has been slated to celebrate Black History Month at KU. Below is a listing of events, dates, locations, descriptions and sponsors.

For more information about any of the events, contact the Office of Multicultural Affairs at 864-4350.

Feb. 7

11 a.m. – 8 p.m. Sabatini Multicultural Resource Center

9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Sabatini Multicultural Resource Center

Tunnel of Oppression

Tours start every 30 minutes and take approximately 20 minutes.

The program is designed to create an awareness of different types of oppression, and its effects, within society and the campus community. The primary goal of the project is to create an interactive program for students, staff and faculty. The program challenges participants in a safe environment. After going through the experience, participants process what they see and feel with trained counselors.

Feb. 8

Tim Wise – featured speaker

7 p.m., Woodruff Auditorium

Wise is among the most prominent anti-racist writers and educators in the United States. Wise is the author of five books, including “White Like Me: Reflections on Race from a Privileged Son” and “Affirmative Action: Racial
Preference in Black and White.”

Sponsors: Office of Multicultural Affairs, Student Involvement and Leadership Center, Union Programs, KU Medical Center, Coca-Cola, The Grove.

Feb. 8

Black Violin
7:30 p.m., Lied Center
Tickets: $10 student/youth; $24 adult

These performers remix classical works with popular music including jazz, funk and hip-hop.

Sponsors: The Eldridge and Oread hotels

Feb. 9

University Career Fair
2 – 6 p.m., fifth floor, Kansas Union

Feb. 10

Human Rights Symposium
Day long, Green Hall

Leading scholars and attorneys in the areas of human rights, immigration and international law will speak at the symposium, which is free and open to the public. Panelists will discuss issues of human rights violations in areas of conflict, the politics of human rights in practice and from a judicial perspective and the status of individual human rights in domestic immigration cases.

Feb. 10

Love Bug Program
Time to be announced

Zeta Phi Beta Sorority will bring a speaker from Student Health Services to help raise STD/HIV awareness on campus.

Feb. 11

7:30 p.m., Inge Theatre

Feb. 13

2:30 p.m., Inge Theatre

Feb. 15

7:30 p.m., Inge Theatre

Undergraduate Projects: Black Box, Slave Narratives

The show is an adaptation of various slave narratives. Constructed and directed by Isaac Dean.

Tickets are $15 for public, $14 for seniors and KU faculty and staff and $10 for students and can be purchased online or by contacting the University Theater at 864-3982.

Feb. 12

Brown Bag Discussion: The State of Diversity in Higher Education
Noon, Sabatini Multicultural Resource Center classroom

Roundtable discussions to open dialogue on current issues regarding diversity in higher education.

Feb. 20

Revitalizing Finer Womanhood
Time/location to be announced

Hosted by Zeta Phi Beta

Feb. 22

Time/location to be announced

Zeta History

History of the sorority, founded in 1920

Feb. 24

3:30 p.m., Alderson Auditorium

Langston Hughes Visiting Professor Lecture, Clarence Lang

The Langston Hughes Visiting Professorship was established at KU in 1977 in honor of the African-American poet, playwright and fiction writer who lived in Lawrence from 1903 to 1916.
Marilyn Stokstad, the Judith Harris Murphy Distinguished Professor Emerita of Art History, has made a contribution that will renovate Spencer Research Library.

Former professor's gift will help renovate Spencer Research Library

A generous gift from a retired KU faculty member and noted art history scholar will leave a major mark on KU Libraries this year.

Marilyn Stokstad, the Judith Harris Murphy Distinguished Professor Emerita of Art History, has given $250,000 to KU Libraries to create a new interior reception space and remodel the reading room at the Kenneth Spencer Research Library. The renovated space, to be named the Marilyn Stokstad Reading Room, will be more open, inviting and visible — key qualities at the library, where researchers spend most of their time in the reading room because the collections do not circulate and are preserved in closed stacks.

“As a world-renowned author and researcher in her own right, Dr. Stokstad clearly understands the importance
of the Spencer Research Library not only for faculty and researchers on campus, but throughout the world,” said Lorraine Haricombe, dean of KU Libraries. “I am so pleased that Marilyn has chosen to support this effort, which will have such a positive impact on scholarly research at KU. I feel this project will be a fitting tribute to her support and her contributions to KU as a scholar and teacher.”

The Kenneth Spencer Research Library has been dedicated to the preservation of the extensive collections of books, manuscripts, photos and other items since its opening in 1968. Stokstad hopes that her contribution to the libraries will encourage students and researchers to explore the collections that deepen our understanding of the vast histories of the world.

“Both the Spencer Museum of Art and the Kenneth Spencer Research Library have always felt like home to me,” said Stokstad. “As a medievalist-art historian, you need both a museum and library in which to do your work. At KU, we are fortunate to have world-class institutions in both cases.”

Stokstad, a member of the KU Libraries Board of Advocates, has been a longtime supporter of KU Libraries, with deep ties to the Kenneth Spencer Research Library and the Murphy Art and Architecture Library. She has previously established a generous endowment to support the art history collections at KU Libraries.

The Stokstad Reading Room project will include an enclosed consultation/teaching space for small groups within the reading room, a new central service point to make using the collections easier for visitors and a new interior entryway. Infrastructure improvements include more power outlets and upgraded wiring, essential to 21st century researchers, and new flooring. Construction is slated for summer, with completion anticipated by the start of the fall semester.

“I am thrilled that Dr. Stokstad has chosen to support the Spencer library,” said Beth Whittaker, head of Spencer Research Library. “I hope this renovation will be the first of several major improvements to the building, retaining its historic character while allowing us to transform the way researchers, students and the public experience our outstanding collections.”

Stokstad has been a generous donor to KU throughout her career. In addition to the libraries, she has supported the Spencer Museum of Art, the Hall Center for the Humanities, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and the Lied Center of Kansas.

Made possible through a gift from Helen F. Spencer in honor of her late husband, the Kenneth Spencer Research Library and its staff are dedicated to the preservation of diverse collections ranging from Kansas historical records to national political documents. For more information, visit spencer.lib.ku.edu.

‘4-Wichita board formed to guide four-year school move

A cross-section of civic leaders, business executives, university officials and medical professionals have joined together to promote the expansion of the School of Medicine-Wichita to a full, four-year campus by forming a new board, named 4-Wichita.

Wichita attorney and KU alumnus Jeff Kennedy, who is the board’s chair, said the dual purpose of the name, 4-Wichita, reflects the board’s focus on expanding from a two-year to a four-year campus in Wichita as well as promoting the benefits of
educating more medical doctors.

The school expansion represents the School of Medicine’s plan to address the state’s shortage of physicians. As a result of the expansion, more physicians will be educated, many of whom will practice medicine in Kansas and improve health care access for Kansans.

- Of the more than 1,600 medical students who have graduated from the Wichita school, almost half have gone on to practice in Kansas compared to a national average of 29 percent of doctors who graduate from medical school and remain in that state to practice, said H. David Wilson, dean of the KU School of Medicine–Wichita.

- Having a full, four-year school in Wichita will improve the quality of all practicing doctors, Wilson said

- The expansion will add the first and second years of coursework to the School of Medicine–Wichita, which was established in 1974 to provide hands-on, clinical training for third- and fourth-year medical students.

With patient-centered care as their guiding principle, the first class of Wichita’s four-year medical students will begin their studies in fall 2011. During the succeeding four years, the school’s number of medical students will gradually increase to as many as 250, up from 110.

- The economic impact of essentially doubling the size of the School of Medicine–Wichita will be felt in all areas of Wichita, Kennedy said, noting that, in 2009, the School of Medicine–Wichita’s economic impact on the metropolitan area reached $49.7 million. A recent study revealed the medical school expansion and the addition of the School of Pharmacy–Wichita may have an economic impact as high as $80 million.

The expansion of the school will provide additional careers for faculty and staff, as will the new school of pharmacy, said Kennedy. The School of Pharmacy will open its Wichita campus in fall 2011, with a new class of eight students and plans to have up to 80 pharmacy students by 2015.

Private philanthropy is critical to expanding the program. Already, area supporters have contributed more than $2.7 million toward the $5 million fundraising goal.

KU study into children's vocal patterns called 'top 10 autism research achievement of 2010'

Autism Speaks, the largest North American autism advocacy and science organization, called the discovery that children with autism have a unique vocal signature one of the top 10 autism research achievements in 2010.

Steven Warren, vice chancellor for research and graduate studies, co-authored the study of pre-verbal children’s vocalizations. Using a new technology, the researchers analyzed multiple characteristics of vocalizations from thousands of hours of recordings of
children in their natural environments.

The LENA (Language Environment Analysis) system correctly identified children with autism spectrum disorder diagnoses with 86 percent accuracy based on an analysis of several known characteristics of vocal development developed by the researchers.

Autism Speaks cited the potential for the portable, easy-to-use technology as an objective early screening and diagnosis tool for autism by physicians. The organization also suggested that LENA could assist speech-language professionals in predicting very young children’s later language development to guide them in the type and timing of therapeutic interventions.

Warren cautioned that the ultimate potential of the tool as a screening device remains to be determined by further research.

The study was headed by D. Kimbrough Oller, professor and chair of excellence in audiology and speech language pathology at the University of Memphis.

The study was published in the July 27, 2010, Proceedings of the National Academy of Science.

Spring job prospects on the rise for KU students

Career fair to have more than 80 companies on hand

For the last few years, graduates have been hearing there will be no jobs available when they finish school. The good news: There is evidence that trend is turning around.

The University Career Center is expecting more than 80 companies to be represented at its Feb. 9 career fair, an increase from the approximately 70 represented last year.

“Most of the employers I’ve had regular contact with feel good about their hiring prospects. I’ve got an overall sense of positivity from them,” said Megan Hill, associate director of the University Career Center.

The National Association of Colleges and Employers is also reporting that its surveys show employers across the country expect to make more hires this year than last.

Employers and recruiters will be on campus this spring meeting students and screening potential employees. National organizations such as the Mayo Clinic are slated to recruit on campus. National and regional employers such as the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp., Aldi Inc., Verizon Wireless, U.S. Department of State, John Hancock Financial Network, DISH Network, Eli Lilly and Co. and Westar Energy are all slated to have representation at the career fair.

David Gaston, assistant vice provost for Student Success, said he has also seen signs that the job market is improving. Earning reports for the last quarter are improving in many sectors, and representatives the university has worked with — many of whom were laid off in recent years — are starting to be hired again.

“Companies are starting to add HR (human resources) people back on,” Gaston said. “Hopefully that means the hiring will start to pick up again. It’s slow going, but things are on the uptick.”

Of course, the number of available jobs is irrelevant if candidates are not prepared. The University Career Center works with students...
throughout the year to help them prepare resumes, practice job interviews and even prepare for attending career fairs.

Attending a career fair or interviewing can be intimidating, but the experience can pay off, Hill said. The more times an employer meets or hears from a student, the better they are able to picture him or her in the organization. Those who have honed the skills of selling their positive traits, know how to dress the part and have a good resume will have an advantage. Gaston agreed, saying students have other advantages. Those entering the job market, especially those who have done internships, are often favorable employees because they don’t cost as much and are easier to train than candidates with years of experience in another organization, who often have to be “retrained.”

“All employers want to know you can be successful in their environment. i.e, did you do an internship, or two or three?” Gaston said. I’ve always said ‘If somebody wants a job and may be willing to move for it, and maybe not take their plan A job right away, there will be opportunities.’”

For more on the Feb. 9 career fair, a list of employers that will be attending and services such as resume review and job postings, visit kucareerhawk.com.

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Lecture series at Commons to examine 'Evolution and Human Affairs'

Few ideas spark as much interest in academia and society as evolution, a topic explored through the sciences, humanities and numerous other disciplines for decades. The spring 2011 University Honors Program Lecture Series at the Commons will put a multidisciplinary lens on the topic “Evolution and Human Affairs.” All lectures associated with the series are free and open to the public.

The lecture series is designed to explore a topic with relevance to current society in a multidisciplinary academic environment. It is sponsored by the University Honors Program and the Commons, a partnership between KU’s Biodiversity Institute, Hall Center for the Humanities and Spencer Museum of Art.

The lectures will enhance the spring 2011 Commons Course, Evolution and Human Affairs, taught by Patricia Hawley, associate professor of psychology. The goal of the course is to provide an introductory “evolutionary lens” through which to explore the natural and social sciences, such as biology, psychology and anthropology; arts, such as music, film and visual media; and humanities, such as literature, philosophy and religious studies. The class will feature guest speakers from the KU faculty whose talks will help students understand how the concept of evolution has affected scholarship and research across the academic spectrum.

The University Honors Program offers a new Commons Course each spring. The course and lecture series were designed to encourage collaboration among departments across the university and thinking outside the realm of singular disciplines. Speakers for the series are selected from proposals submitted by KU faculty and staff.

The lectures will take place at 8 p.m. at the Commons in Spooner Hall.
Welch named Cancer Center's associate director of basic science

Leadership role step toward NCI designation

The KU Cancer Center has hired a national expert in the science of tumor progression, filling a key leadership position and moving the cancer center closer to its goal of attaining National Cancer Institute designation.

Danny Welch has joined the cancer center as associate director of basic science.

Welch comes to the KU Cancer Center from the University of Alabama-at-Birmingham, where he was director of the National Foundation for Cancer Research Center for Cancer Metastasis Research and the Leonard H. Robinson professor of pathology. He has held previous research positions at the Pennsylvania University College of Medicine, Glaxo Research Laboratories and the Upjohn Co. His research focuses on understanding how tumors metastasize.

“Ninety percent of the deaths and poor quality of life caused by cancer are due to metastasis — when cancer cells spread to make colonies elsewhere in the body,” Welch said.

His lab has developed many widely used metastasis models and discovered six of the 30 known metastasis suppressors. With experience in genetics, biochemistry, molecular biology and cell biology, his research interests also include breast, melanoma, ovarian, pancreatic and colorectal cancers, glioblastoma and lymphoma.

“We’re very excited to have an experienced national leader in cancer research joining the cancer center as associate director of basic science,” said Roy A. Jensen, director of the KU Cancer Center. “I see great opportunities for synergy between his research program and our drug development program. He has a number of initiatives in his lab that are prime for developmental therapeutics right now. The opportunity for all of these folks to get together is very exciting.”

Welch has been named a Kansas Bioscience Eminent Scholar by the Kansas Bioscience Authority, which...
is contributing about $1.6 million for his recruitment. Through the eminent scholars program, the KBA helps Kansas institutions recruit established researchers who, like Welch, are nationally recognized for their scientific achievements and entrepreneurial spirit.

Welch will also serve as founding chair of a newly created Department of Cancer Biology. Cancer center leaders estimate there are fewer than 20 such departments in the country.

“Research in the 21st century is built upon interaction among disciplines,” said Barbara Atkinson, executive vice chancellor of the KU Medical Center. “Historically, university researchers have stayed within their own disciplines. As chair of our new Department of Cancer Biology, Dr. Welch will see to it that scientists from an array of disciplines are working together to discover new treatments and cures for cancer.”

Welch said he was excited to be part of the cancer center’s team of newly recruited leaders. “It’s a cancer center that’s on the rise,” he said. “There’s a palpable sense that the community is behind it and the state of Kansas is behind it. I want to be part of taking it to the next level.”

Welch is past chair of the National Institutes of Health/National Cancer Institute Cancer Genetics Study Section. He received his doctorate in biomedical sciences-tumor biology from the University of Texas-Houston Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences and completed a postdoctoral fellowship in tumor biology at the University of Texas-MD Anderson Cancer Center.

He began working at the KU Cancer Center part-time in January and will become full-time on April 1.

The KU Cancer Center will apply for National Cancer Institute designation in September.