Mizzou investigates campus death of Highland, Ill., teenager

University of Missouri Police are investigating a death of a Highland, Ill., teenager who was found unresponsive in the residence of a student on campus this morning.

At 9:07 a.m., the University Police Department responded to the Pershing group of residence halls for a medical emergency.

Officers found Gregory Holthaus, 18, unconscious and not breathing.

Holthaus, a 2013 graduate of Highland High School, was a guest of one of the residents, said Brian Weimer, police department spokesman.

Medical personnel and the Columbia Fire Department responded to the scene where they started life-saving measures and transported Holthaus to the University Hospital where he was pronounced dead.

Investigators are interviewing Holthaus's friends and others in the area in addition to gathering evidence associated with a death investigation, Weimer said.

Weimer said there is no indication of foul play. The official cause of death will be released by the medical examiner at a later time.

Residential Life and the University will be providing assistance, including counseling and other support services, to those affected by this incident, he said.

A memorial service for Holthaus is being held at 8 p.m. tonight at the Highland town square.

Funeral services for Holthaus are being handled by Meridith Funeral Home in Highland.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Man found unconscious at MU residence hall, pronounced dead Sunday

By James Gordon

October 13, 2013 | 3:29 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — An 18-year-old man was pronounced dead Sunday morning after being found unconscious in an MU residence hall.

According to an MU Police Department news release, MU police officers found Gregory Gerard Holthaus of Highland, Ill., unconscious and not breathing shortly after 9 a.m. Paramedics started performing life-saving procedures and transported him to University Hospital, where he was declared dead.

Frankie Minor, director of MU's Department of Residential Life, said he believed it was Holthaus' friends who called emergency services.

*Holthaus was found in Dogwood Hall, a residence hall near the MU Student Recreation Complex, according to Minor. He was a guest of one of the residents in the building and was not an MU student.

The official cause of death has not yet been released, but there is no indication of foul play, according to the release. MU police Capt. Brian Weimer said he could not specify whether there were any signs of life when police arrived and said that more information would be released Monday.

Residential Life staff will be providing counseling and other support services to those impacted by the death, according to Minor.

*Supervising editor is Edward Hart.*
Sexual assault in MU residence hall reported

By Amanda Becker

October 11, 2013 | 8:33 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA – MU Residential Life staff received a report that a female MU student was sexually assaulted in her room in a residence hall early Sunday, according to a news release from the MU Police Department.

According to the release, a man entered the student's room after she opened the door, expecting a friend.

The student's residence hall is in the Rollins group, and at the time of the assault, all exterior doors to the facility were locked, according to the release.

The student received medical attention and has decided not to speak to MU police.

Supervising editor is Allie Hinga.
The University of Missouri has become part of a high-speed computer network.

The university announced Thursday that the network will offer speeds of up to 100 gigabits per second. Officials hope the higher speeds will enhance the school's research capabilities.

The Columbia Daily Tribune reports that Internet2, a not-for-profit computer networking group, has named the university an "innovation campus," joining other pilot sites for next-generation Internet.

Gary Allen, vice president of IT for the University of Missouri System, says the university has used Internet2 through an off-campus provider for years, but now it has a direct link because the backbone of the Innovation Network runs from Kansas City to St. Louis, passing through Columbia.
Faster file transfer made available to MU researchers

By Natalia Alamdari

Researchers will now operate with an Internet2 connection, allowing for faster transfer of information and easier collaboration with other campuses, Vice President of Information Technology Gary Allen announced Thursday at the first Cyberinfrastructure Day.

With research projects requiring large amounts of data space, researchers often find themselves waiting on data transport rather than putting their findings into practice. Internet2’s connection runs tens of thousands times faster than the university’s current cyber-infrastructure, allowing faster movement of data, Allen said.

“Right now there are still faculty on this campus who find it easier to burn their data sets onto DVDs and Fedex them across the country to a supercomputing system so they can be analyzed,” Allen said. “Instead of having to do that, you're going to be able to do it in seconds or minutes.”

Allen said a faster cyber-infrastructure will make communication easier for researchers.

“It is a direct significant accelerator of the speed at which research can be performed and enables researchers to easily have a connection over the network to a piece of instrumentation in somebody else’s lab,” Allen said.

Cyberinfrastructure Day featured tours of the iLab, a virtual reality simulator that allows users to do anything from capture 3-D images to create interactive buildings.

Those in attendance had the opportunity to use the program, placing virtual humans into architectural designs.

The iLab features Oculus glasses, which gives users the feeling of standing in the building they are designing.

In addition, Cyberinfrastructure Day consisted of multiple talks and seminars covering computing technology and research. The main goal of the day, Allen said, was to increase awareness of the necessity of investing in technology to aid research.

“It is the way that we can make the university more competitive — it is the way that we can be doing state-of-the-art research that will attract better students, better grad students and better faculty,” Allen said. “It is the way that research is being done, so it’s an important consideration for research nowadays regardless of what discipline you're in.”
MU research chief Rob Duncan leaving for Texas Tech

Friday, October 11, 2013 at 2:00 pm Comments (3)

Rob Duncan, the University of Missouri's vice chancellor for research, will leave for a similar position at Texas Tech University starting Jan. 1.

Duncan, who has worked at MU since 2008, announced today he will become the vice president for research at the university in Lubbock.

"I was born and raised in Missouri, and wherever I go, I'll always be a Missourian, but at the same time I see really good opportunities all around," said Duncan, a St. Joseph native.

Duncan said he was approached by a firm conducting the search for TTU's vice president of research more than a year ago. He expressed little enthusiasm at first, he said, because he enjoyed working at MU. "I really never planned to leave Mizzou," he said.

When he heard Duane Nellis would take the helm of Texas Tech as president, he became intrigued. "I became very interested in Texas Tech because the state of Texas is concentrating their resources to make Texas Tech the third major 'Tier 1' research public university," he said. The other two Tier 1 public universities are Texas A&M and the University of Texas-Austin. MU is also a Tier 1 university.

As vice chancellor for research, Duncan has concentrated on research enterprise. Since his appointment, university researchers have filed 365 patents and signed more than 225 options and licenses for new technologies developed at MU. Duncan is also responsible for the management of MU's major research facilities, including the MU Research Reactor, multiple interdisciplinary research centers and MU's economic development and technology incubation efforts.

"It is hard to enumerate Rob's many contributions to MU, the broader Columbia community, his home state of Missouri and, in fact, the nation during his tenure here," Provost Brian Foster said in a prepared statement.

Mike Brooks, president of Regional Economic Development Inc., said Duncan has been a great friend to the public-private economic development agency and to the community. Brooks said Duncan has been an ex officio member of the REDI board and has been a strong supporter of entrepreneurship and the value it brings to job growth.
Rob Hall, associate vice chancellor for research/director of compliance, will serve as interim vice chancellor for research. Hall has been at MU since 1977 and in the MU Office of Research since 2000. Spokeswoman Mary Jo Banken said it will be up to the new chancellor to decide how to go about filling the permanent position. The MU chancellor search committee is currently screening and vetting applicants, according to the UM System website. Chancellor Brady Deaton will retire effective Nov. 15.
Rob Duncan, MU vice chancellor, to leave for position at Texas Tech

By Molly Duffy

October 11, 2013 | 6:43 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Rob Duncan, MU's vice chancellor for research, is leaving MU to take a position at Texas Tech University, Provost Brian Foster announced Friday.

Duncan, who has served as vice chancellor since 2008, said he intends to resign from MU on Dec. 31, and he will start as vice president for research at Texas Tech in Lubbock, Texas, on Jan. 1.

"The University of Missouri in Columbia is one of the truly excellent research universities in the world," Duncan said. "One thing that I hope to do over the next few years is build Texas Tech to the level of research excellence that we have achieved at the University of Missouri."

Duncan's departure is one of several during the past year in MU's administration. Budget Director Tim Rooney retired in December, Chancellor Brady Deaton will retire Nov. 15, and both Foster and Jackie Jones, vice chancellor of MU Administrative Services, will retire this December.

In his position at MU, Duncan has been responsible for the university's research enterprise. According to an MU News Bureau news release, he has oversight of the management of MU's research facilities, including the MU Research Reactor, interdisciplinary centers, and MU's economic and technology incubation efforts.

He is also responsible for helping facilitate research conducted by MU faculty.
Duncan said he is proud of many accomplishments during his tenure as vice chancellor, including establishing the Sidney Kimmel Institute for Nuclear Renaissance, which is a group of MU scientists who study low-energy nuclear reactions.

He also said it has been wonderful to be able to collaborate with others to make MU a Coulter Translational Partnership institution. The partnership helps scientists bridge the gap between their discoveries in the lab and the marketplace. Duncan said there are only 15 partner institutions in the U.S., and they are some of the top universities in the world.

"It's been wonderful to see the University of Missouri become one of them," he said.

MU spokeswoman Mary Jo Banken said Duncan has had a significant effect during his five years as vice chancellor.

"He's been very interested in taking the research that our faculty and our students do and helping to develop that research into companies," she said.

Banken said MU has filed more patents and signed more licenses for new technology with Duncan as vice chancellor. That technology has been "developed into companies which have impacted the economy and the state, and actually the nation," she said.

Banken said it's not unusual for a top administrator of a national university to be recruited by another university, as Duncan was.

Still, she said, "we are saddened to see him go because we all think very highly of him and appreciate what he has done for MU."

Rob Hall, MU's associate vice chancellor for research, will serve as interim vice chancellor beginning Jan. 1. Hall has been at MU for 36 years and has been in the Office of Research since 2000, according to the news release, and he said he has filled the interim vice chancellor position twice before.

"The situation is always to keep the research operation running efficiently and keep everything moving forward as we progress to identify a new vice chancellor for research," he said.
Hall said he expects MU to hire an external candidate to fill its vice chancellor vacancy, which he said will take some time.

"There'll have to be a search committee put together," Hall said. "The provost will take the lead on that, and then we'll go through the process, have interviews, and then eventually, there'll be a successful candidate identified who is, in all likelihood, going to be at another institution and have to disengage."

It will be up to the new chancellor, who has yet to be hired, to choose Duncan's successor, Banken said.

"I think it's important for whoever the next chancellor is, that he or she be able to really select their leadership team," Duncan said. "It's important that that leadership team be handpicked by the next chancellor, just as (Texas Tech President) Duane Nellis has selected me."

*Missourian reporter* [T.J. Thomson](mailto:T.J.Thomson) **contributed.**

*Supervising editor is* [Margaux Henquinet](mailto:Margaux.Henquinet).
University hospital using new projects to resolve preventable readmissions

By Jodie Jackson Jr.

Sunday, October 13, 2013 at 2:00 am Comments (1)

Like health systems across the nation, University of Missouri Health Care is looking at ways to reduce preventable hospital readmissions.

Public relations manager Mary Jenkins said MU Health launched an initiative in 2010 that focused on post-discharge calls to patients. The Columbia-based health system has set a goal of reducing “unplanned readmissions” by 10 percent in fiscal year 2014, Jenkins said in an email.

MU Health has established a number of projects aimed at meeting that goal:

- Testing ways to identify patients — while they are still in the hospital — who are at a higher risk for readmission because of their diagnoses, medications or other factors.

“This allows us to focus intensively on preparing these patients for their care after hospitalization,” Jenkins said.

- Using a team approach for the hospital discharge process that involves physicians, nurses, pharmacists, social workers and other health professionals.

“We recognize that preventable readmissions often occur because patients are confused about how to care for themselves after they leave the hospitals,” Jenkins said. The team works to help patients make arrangements for their care after leaving the hospital and aims to help patients understand how to use their medications.

- Calling patients returning home within 48 hours after being discharged from the hospital to check up on their progress and answer questions.

- Coordinating with skilled nursing facilities to follow up on patients with a higher risk of readmission.

- Reviewing the care of every patient readmitted with heart failure, heart attack and pneumonia to understand why the patient was readmitted and to develop additional processes to prevent readmissions.
Jenkins said another important step in reducing readmissions is simply letting patients know they can call if they have questions after leaving the hospital.

In addition, the MU School of Medicine is using a $13.3 million grant to develop a program that is expected to improve care and decrease costs for some 10,000 Medicare patients cared for through the MU Health system.

Project LIGHT2 — Leveraging Information Technology to Guide High Tech, High Touch Care — could become a national model, MU health officials said last July after the grant was awarded.

Jerry Parker, director of LIGHT2 and associate dean for research at the MU School of Medicine, said health information analysts will mine patient medical records to give physicians a “snapshot” of the health of individual patients and groups of patients. The information, he said, could indicate good health outcomes or that a health crisis is happening.

“It’s a new way of using health information before a crisis occurs,” Parker said.

The emphasis on using a team of health professionals to provide care or discharge information is another key element of LIGHT2.

Parker noted the current system usually brings doctors and patients together only when problems occur. He said the United States spends more money on health care — treatment for chronic conditions rather than preventive services — yet Americans generally score lower on most health indicators compared with other industrialized nations.

Jenkins said LIGHT2 is expected to save $17 million in health care costs over the next three years. Cost savings should come from reducing emergency room visits and unnecessary medical procedures and hospital admissions, officials said last July.

“To date, the LIGHT2 project is on track and has met our enrollment goals,” Jenkins said, “but we are still in the process of collecting data related to readmissions.”
Christian Sims' eyes fluttered as he heard the bells ding on the ring-a-bell reach panel, just one of many therapeutic elements featured on the outdoor playground in the new $1 million University of Missouri Children's Hospital Therapy Center.

Christian, 14, struggles with several disorders, including seizures, Crohn's disease, optic nerve atrophy and blindness. His mother, Paula Sims of Boonville, would slide the metal musical note on the reach panel into the bell, producing a "dinging" sound and a smile on her son's face. Sims said it's wonderful to have a place close to home to get all the services Christian needs. She also was delighted that the playground is wheelchair-accessible and has toys to cater to different senses.

"Sometimes it's not easy to maneuver him around because he's getting so big, and for this to be wheelchair-accessible is awesome," Sims said.

The new 8,300-square-foot center at 525 Keene St. will provide expanded physical, occupational and speech therapy services for children in Central Missouri. It features one of the few therapeutic rehabilitation playgrounds in the country, according to a news release. The center, which opened Sept 23, held a public open house yesterday.

"One of the main problems with any playground is they have accessible structures, but they don't have accessible ground surfacing; once the kids get to the play structure, they can play, but they can't get through the mulch by themselves," said Kim Dohm, an occupational therapist and clinical supervisor for rehabilitations services. The surface of the playground is made of rubber flooring, Dohm said.

Dohm said the 2,000-square-foot outdoor playground is one of only two that she knows of. The other one is a sensory playground designed for children with autism located in Denver. Dohm said each structure within the playground incorporates therapeutic elements — for instance, a gravel pit will help kids learn how to walk or push their chairs through gravel.
In addition to the playground, the therapy center features speech therapy rooms, a feeding and dysphasia treatment room for patients with swallowing disorders, an indoor treatment gym for physical and occupational therapy, a splinting and casting room, and a low-stimulation treatment room for infants and children with autism spectrum disorders, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and other conditions, and an activity room to focus on eye-hand coordination and motor skills.

Tim Fete, medical director of Children's Hospital and chairman of the MU School of Medicine's Department of Child Health and Children's Miracle Network Professor in Pediatrics, said the facility also features a day-treatment center.

"There are lots of children who don't qualify for hospital stays and don't actually require hospital stays, but they need intensive therapy for multiple hours per day," Fete said. The center features a room devoted to the child's therapy and a room where the child's family can rest and eat meals.

The center serves about 285 patients a week, and Dohm said she hopes to increase to 400 patient visits a week.
Giuseppe Verdi's arias displayed at MU Honors College 'Speaking of Culture' talk

By Elise Schmelzer

October 13, 2013 | 8:15 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — When Michael Budds hears the music of composer Giuseppe Verdi, it's as if he can't help but stand on his tip-toes and quietly sing the composer's arias in an operatic soprano that's usually left to the professionals.

Those arias were on full display Sunday during the MU professor's "Speaking of Culture" talk, the second in a new series of lectures organized by the MU Honors College.

Nearly 60 people gathered in Orr Street Studios for the lecture to learn about Verdi's opera and to celebrate the composer's 200th birthday, which was Thursday.

Budds led the group through an exploration of Verdi's life and music. The 19th-century Italian composer is best known for his attention to the artistic preferences of the middle class and the well-known song "La Donna è Mobile."

Although all of Verdi's works are in Italian, Budds assured the crowd that the lyrics needed very little translation — everything could be understood by the tone of the song.

"There are three Italian words you need to know to understand Italian opera," he said. "Addio, goodbye. Vendetta, revenge. And amore."

Sophomore Jared Law said that although he'd studied the composer before, the lecture really helped him understand the music on a deeper level.

"I've heard of Verdi and his works, but I've never thought about interpreting them," he said.
Five students from the MU Honors College organized the lecture series as part of a semester-long class led by Gabriel Fried, a visiting assistant professor in MU’s English department.

They are responsible for publicizing the events, coordinating with the speakers and making sure everything is set up on the day of the event. They even worked together to bake the homemade pumpkin bread served to their guests in the kitchen of Nancy West, director of the Honors College.

Marjorie Perkins, the student in charge of Sunday's event, said attendance for the lectures has exceeded expectations.

"Oh gosh, we've had so many more people than expected," she said. "For the first one we had 40 chairs set up, and we were expecting 15 or 20 people. But then 102 people came, and we had to start pulling chairs from everywhere."

Because she really enjoyed some of the lectures she attended as part of her coursework at MU, Perkins said she wanted to help bring that experience to Columbia as a whole.

"It's something different and pretty unique," Perkins said. "It gives people something new to learn about."

The topics of the lectures vary widely: the intersection of poetry and baseball, the significance of famous St. Louis architecture and Julia Roberts' portrayals of art historians are slated for discussion in the upcoming months.

And topics for next year are already being brainstormed.

The idea for a new lecture series for the public began about a year ago when West approached Fried with the idea. Modeled after the university's Saturday Morning Science program, the two wanted to create a series for people interested in topics of culture.

"There are lots of people in this town with lots of different takes on culture and the arts," Fried said. "We just want to give them a chance to talk in a larger setting."

Fried and the students appeared to successfully create these conversations. Although people entered the studio audibly talking about quotidian concerns, such as babysitting
grandchildren and homework, they could be heard discussing famous composers and how the history of humanity is written through music as they left.

*Supervising editor is* Edward Hart.
Sales taxes in KC are high, but do voters think so?

By MIKE HENDRICKS

A penny here, an eighth of a cent there. Pretty soon, all those sales taxes begin to add up.

In some parts of the Kansas City area, sales taxes add an extra dime to the bill for every dollar’s worth of goods you buy. They tack an extra 12 percent onto the cost of restaurant meals in the Power & Light District and at the Ameristar Casino.

In November comes another sales tax election in Jackson County, prompting policymakers and elected officials to ponder a question that’s coming up more and more:

How high can sales taxes rise before voters balk at future rate hikes, either by refusing to approve tax measures at the polls or casting out elected leaders who dare to impose increases?

“At some point, people are going to push back,” said Troy Schulte, Kansas City city manager.

Proponents of a 20-year, half-cent sales tax to fund medical research in Jackson County hope we’re not at that point just yet. Besides, county voters have shown again and again that they are not “tax adverse,” said Steve Glorioso, spokesman for the Committee for Research, Treatment and Cures.

“They have approved tax increases,” he said, “for good ideas for the police, anti-drug programs, sports stadiums and even for animals in the zoo.”

However, campaign officials also acknowledge that going for a sales tax to underwrite the proposed Jackson County Institute for Translational Medicine was a last resort. Rather than gamble on getting taxpayers to foot the bill, they’d hoped to secure a dependable funding stream from the federal government, the pharmaceutical industry or charitable foundations.

But when those efforts fell short they proposed a sales tax that will raise the base rate in Kansas City to 8.85 percent, higher than Denver, Dallas, St. Louis, Minneapolis and most other large or medium-sized cities west of the Mississippi River and east of the Rockies.
“We’re a very high-taxed city,” says Crosby Kemper III, who in addition to running the Kansas City Library is chairman of the Show Me Institute, a St. Louis-based think tank and government watchdog group.

Whatever happens on Nov. 5, area policymakers will be watching closely. If the medical research tax passes, for instance, will that make it more difficult to pass the next tax measure coming down the tracks, such as a tax to pay for a commuter rail system?

“Is this the tipping point?” said businessman Dave Nepstad, who owns a coffee stand in the Commerce Bank Building downtown. “I don’t know. I guess you’ll have to ask Malcolm Gladwell about that.”

Special districts

Gladwell, author of “The Tipping Point,” was writing about societal trends rather than the point at which taxpayers refuse to open up their wallets.

Yet not even national experts on tax policy know where that line is.

Local officials have been fretting about sales tax pushback at least as far back as the late 1980s, when rates were laughably lower than they are today.

Back then sales tax was 5.7 percent in many cities on the Kansas side of the Kansas City area. On the Missouri side, 6.225 percent.

A quarter century later, you’ll find few if any cities in the area with a base sales tax rate below 7.725 percent, and most are in the mid to upper 8s.

Except it’s getting harder and harder to find shopping areas in town that charge that base rate.

“A city might have a base tax rate of, say, 8.35 percent,” said Jeff Pinkerton, senior researcher at the Mid-America Regional Council. “But there may not actually be many places where you could actually only pay 8.35 percent, due to the special taxing districts.”

On both sides of the state line, city councils have been glad to sanction the creation of CIDs and TDDs, short for Community Improvement Districts and Transportation Development Districts.

In both cases, property owners along a given street or in a given area ask for city permission to raise their own real estate taxes, impose a sales tax of up to 1 percent on their customers, or do both so they can raise money for things like snow removal, added security or parking lots.

Name a prominent shopping area in town, and it’s likely to be in one or the other.

The Country Club Plaza is part of a CID, and so are Zona Rosa and the Schlitterbahn water park in Kansas City, Kan. The Power & Light District is a TDD, and so is Oak Park Mall.
The Ameristar Casino is both, charging customers 2 percent on top of the base sales tax rate of 8.1 percent in the Clay County portion of Kansas City.

On the plus side, the money raised goes to make those areas cleaner, safer and more accessible. People notice the improvements, but they’re also beginning to notice the costs of those taxes piled atop all the others, said Kansas City Councilman Ed Ford, who heads a committee that evaluates new taxing districts.

“I think it’s one of those things,” Ford said, “that when you go in and get your burgers and fries, and afterward your bill comes up 15 cents more than you expected, people notice.”

Nepstad, owner of that downtown coffee stand, not only notices, he cringes every time the sales tax rate goes up, because he includes the sales tax in the price of his drinks.

So when the 1 percent streetcar tax was added recently, his choice was to eat that cost or raise prices.

“I haven’t raised them yet,” he said, “but it’s coming.”

Carl Markus said his customers also have noticed the higher taxes. The downtown jewelry store he manages, the Polished Edge, has to charge 2 percent above the base rate because it’s in both the Power & Light and streetcar districts, but he doesn’t apologize for it.

“I tell them we’re getting the light rail,” he said. “If you justify why (taxes) are the way they are, people are happy. It’s part of being in a city.”

Research tax

Most of the $40 million that the medical research tax would raise each year would go to pay the salaries of top researchers and their staffs at the University of Missouri-Kansas City and two private hospitals, Children’s Mercy and St. Luke’s.

Med tax supporters say those dollars would be a good investment that would improve health care options in the community and create jobs.

But opponents maintain that, while those goals are admirable, it’s an inappropriate use of sales tax dollars. Sales taxes typically fund public works projects or local services or government-run institutions that serve the broad populace.

“Local sales taxes are regressive, are getting too high in our community and in any event should be used carefully to provide services that only government can provide,” Citizens Association chairman Dan Cofran said in an email following his board’s decision to oppose the tax.

Glorioso counters that people generally complain about the regressive nature of sales taxes as a matter of convenience. Groups like the Citizens Association and Freedom Inc., which also opposes the med tax, have previously supported sales tax issues, he said.
“The concern about a regressive tax tends to be higher if a resident doesn’t like the proposal for which the tax is intended,” Glorioso told The Star’s editorial board recently.

Sales taxes have been on the rise nationwide, in part because of cutbacks in federal aid to state and local governments.

“To me, it all started with the balanced budget act of ’96,” said Ford, who was on the City Council then and now. “What used to be considered a state or federal function is now considered a local function.”

**To make up the difference in their budgets, local leaders increasingly have turned to the sales tax. After all, it’s a much easier sell than increasing even less-popular forms of taxation, said Joseph Haslag, Kenneth Lay chairman in economics at the University of Missouri.**

“Property taxes and income taxes,” he said, “seem to be the bigger bogeymen.”

Should the research tax pass in Jackson County, the base rate in Kansas City would be 8.85 percent, up from 8.35.

While Haslag said that might cause some people to change their shopping habits to avoid paying the higher tax, it’s not like there are all that many options.

With Olathe and Overland Park already at 8.5 percent, for instance, smart shoppers would want to factor in the cost of making the drive, said Chicago-based sales tax expert Diane Yetter.

“It’s probably only makes more of a difference on the big-ticket items,” she said.