Missouri to freeze higher education tuition

By BETSY TAYLOR
Associated Press Writer

Tuition and academic fees will be frozen for the second straight year at Missouri's public four-year colleges and universities, Gov. Jay Nixon announced Tuesday.

Nixon said he will have to reduce higher education spending by 5.2 percent, or $42 million, for the next fiscal year. The schools' leaders agreed to the tuition freeze for the 2010-11 tuition year, while the governor pledged upcoming education budget cuts will be less steep than they could have been in tough economic times.

The agreement must still be approved by Missouri lawmakers and governing boards at the colleges and universities. Nixon, a Democrat, said his administration worked with university leaders and faculty in gaining support for the freeze.

"Keeping higher education affordable is one of the best steps we can take to turn this economy around," Nixon said. "By working together to freeze tuition we are reversing a decade-long trend."

Before the freeze for the 2009-10 academic year, Missouri's four-year colleges and universities increased tuition by an average of 7.5 percent per year over the past decade. And Nixon noted that nationally, tuition has jumped by an average of 6.5 percent in the past year. Some states saw increases of up to 17 percent.

University of Missouri System President Gary Forsee said the state's universities share in the desire to keep quality education affordable.

"Today's agreement with the governor is an important step, but we have more work to do," Forsee said at the news conference. "The higher education funding model is broken."

Forsee said the tuition agreement should help smooth out the previous "roller coaster" of less state funding and higher tuition costs. He called for several steps to improve higher education, like more flexibility with e-learning options over the Internet, year-round learning choices and accelerated degree-completion programs to allow adults to more quickly obtain degrees.

He said Missouri needs to better match high school requirements to what is needed to obtain a college degree. He also supports efforts to equalize Access Missouri, the state's main financial needs-based scholarship program. Currently, students attending four-year private schools get more money through that program than those going to public schools.

Forsee couldn't yet detail where cuts will be in the University of Missouri system from the anticipated 5 percent reduction in higher education proposed by the governor. And he said higher education
improvements should be made despite challenging economic times, saying "it's not an either/or, it's an and."

In a statement, Missouri State University President Michael Nietzel said, "First and foremost, higher education is about our students, and we must ensure that a four-year education remains as affordable and accessible as possible."

House Budget Committee Chairman Allen Icet, R-Wildwood, said Nixon was being proactive in trying to keep tuition costs steady while anticipating another difficult budget year.

"I understand why the governor did that, to be prepared for 2011," Icet said.

House Speaker Ron Richard, R-Joplin, said, "We appreciate the governor's tuition proposal and will put it through the normal process, along with any other budget recommendations from the governor."

The agreement allows a tuition increase for out-of-state students.

The tuition freeze was welcome news to Sandra Ray, 48, of the St. Louis suburb of St. John. Her three children, Sharon, Ryan and Taylor are all students in University of Missouri schools, and her husband was laid off from his job as a union carpenter last year.

They have taken out loans and relied on scholarship money, but the tuition freeze was a help for the family, she said. "It allowed us to feel that we have hope. It's another opportunity for them to fulfill their dreams," said Ray, who also works at the university in St. Louis. "This news is an answer. It gives you breathing space."
Tight times expected at MU

Flat salaries said to be ‘best case.’

By Janese Heavin

Wednesday, November 18, 2009

University of Missouri faculty members are gearing up for another penny-pinching year in 2010.

Gov. Jay Nixon announced yesterday he will propose a budget that keeps core funding to universities at roughly 95 percent of the current allocation if universities, in turn, keep tuition flat again next year. That means Nixon is essentially proposing a $42 million cut in state aid to public universities, which could be seen as minimal considering the state already has seen a 14 percent decrease in revenues this year.

The arrangement “just reflects the gravity of the budget situation for the university and the state,” MU Faculty Council Chairwoman Leona Rubin said. “We recognize it’s not going to be easy.”

The cut in state funding would mean a $21 million loss to the UM System next year. It’s too early to say specifically how that might affect the university, but Rubin said a continuation of the hiring freeze and flat salaries would be a “best-case scenario.”

And the worst-case scenario? “Most units already have cut to bare bones,” Rubin said. “A 5 percent cut on top would mean somebody has to leave.”

And, although UM President Gary Forsee has repeatedly said competitive faculty salaries are a priority, Rubin said she would rather ensure positions remain intact next year. Most faculty, she said, would “rather pass up raises and not have cuts.”

Technically, the university could offset some of the lost state funding with increases to graduate-level and out-of-state tuition, as well as activity and other non-academic fees. None of those is frozen under the arrangement with Nixon. Forsee was expected to meet with staff today to discuss what those charges should look like during the 2010-11 school year.

Cuts made to the current university budget in anticipation of future state decreases also will help offset some of the loss, Forsee said this morning.

MU already was gearing up for a cut in state funding next year, and one budget scenario predicted the 5 percent cut. MU administrators also were considering the possibility of raising tuition by the Consumer Price Index, assumed to be at about 3 percent. A 3 percent increase in
tuition at MU would have generated roughly an additional $8 million, MU Budget Director Tim Rooney said. The agreement with Nixon would prevent that increase, but he praised the arrangement for helping administrators better plan for the future. "The thing that's good about it is that we now have a target and we know what we're dealing with," Rooney said. "The uncertainty was killing us. Now that we have a target, we can move forward and make plans."

Although Nixon can propose a budget that includes a 5 percent cut to higher education, it's up to the General Assembly to allocate funding. Rep. Chris Kelly, D-Columbia, said yesterday he does not feel obligated to uphold Nixon's end of the bargain and that lawmakers could withhold more or less than the 5 percent from universities.

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UPDATE: UM president calls higher education funding model 'broken'

By Ben Wieder
November 18, 2009 | 6:56 p.m. CST

MU student leaders watch as Gov. Jay Nixon gives details regarding the agreement to freeze tuition for undergraduate in-state students Wednesday at the Reynolds Alumni Center. "By helping keep higher education affordable, we are taking bold steps to prepare the workforce that will move Missouri forward," Nixon said.

COLUMBIA — Gov. Jay Nixon's proposed plan to freeze tuition is a step in the right direction, University of Missouri System President Gary Forsee said on Wednesday, but there's much more work to do.

"The higher education business model, the funding model, is broken," Forsee said in a morning news conference at MU with Nixon and MU Chancellor Brady Deaton. "The time to start reforming that path is now."

Later, Deaton said Nixon's plan would mean that the hiring freeze in place at MU and other UM institutions since November 2008 would likely continue for the foreseeable future.
Nixon has proposed freezing undergraduate tuition next year for Missouri residents at four-year public institutions across the state. In exchange, the governor has pledged to recommend that state higher education appropriations be cut by 5.2 percent, or about $42 million, next year, preserving 95 percent of the current state appropriations.

The affected undergraduate resident tuition accounts for about 50 percent of the $270 million tuition and supplemental fees revenue at MU, said MU Budget Director Tim Rooney. Tuition and state appropriations combined account for more than 90 percent of MU's operating costs.

At the news conference, Forsee spoke of the need to explore more efficient models of education that would employ Internet tools and flexible scheduling as well as align standards across all levels of education.

"Today there are high school graduation requirements that don't match to college entrance requirements," Forsee said, echoing statements he made on Tuesday when Nixon announced his plan in St. Louis. "Every junior high school student in this state ought to have a pathway lighted showing them how to get to college and what that opportunity can provide."

Forsee, who had just returned from an annual meeting of the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities, cited MU's recent partnership with Cerner Corp. to create the Tiger Institute of Health as an example of another funding avenue to be explored.

State Rep. Chris Kelly, D-Columbia, praised MU's exploration of private sources of funding but said funding from the private sector will not replace the need for state funding. "The amount of money is not comparable," Kelly said in a separate interview.

Rather than seek outside funding, Kelly said state university officials need to assert their needs more strongly to politicians.

"For a long time, the university has been too submissive to the state," Kelly said.

As an example of the kind of efforts universities need to be making, Kelly cited Nixon's reversal of proposed cuts to MU Extension earlier this year.

After the news conference, Deaton said the university will continue to maintain a strong commitment to Mizzou Advantage, MU's recently unveiled plan to increase
collaboration and hire new faculty in five key interdisciplinary areas of institutional strength. But reduced appropriations and a tuition freeze "create a tight environment," Deaton said.

Nixon hopes that a proposed tuition freeze would have a positive effect on the entire state.

"Keeping higher education affordable is one of the best steps we can take to turn this economy around," Nixon told the gathering at Reynolds Alumni Center.

But Kelly questioned whether the proposed tuition freeze should have come from the governor in the first place.

"I don't believe the state government ought to be in the business of telling the curators how to run this institution," Kelly said.

Kelly was critical of Nixon's decision not to include legislators in discussion of the plan. Legislators were "informed, rather than consulted" about the governor's proposed plan, Kelly said.

Legislators will ultimately decide whether to approve the plan, Kelly said, not the governor.

Nixon's plan requires the approval of the Missouri General Assembly, which will convene in January, and the governing boards of the affected state institutions.
Nixon announces plan to cut higher ed, freeze tuition for 2010-11

JEFFERSON CITY | Gov. Jay Nixon is announcing a deal to cut higher education funding but freeze tuition for most students in a flyaround today.

Under the arrangement reached with university leaders, higher-ed funding for the 2010-11 budget year would be cut a relatively modest 5.2 percent -- about $42 million -- and tuition would be held steady for in-state undergraduate students.

"To turn this economy around, Missourians must be trained, educated and ready to work, and that's why it was vital that we kept tuition flat for Missouri families," Nixon, a Democrat, said in a statement.

The deal isn't exactly a sure thing, though.

The higher education budget must still go through the appropriations process in the legislature, which could completely disregard the deal and cut more (or less) than the 5.2 percent.

Revenue estimates for the coming budget year, which begins next July, won't be completed until January, meaning it'll be at least that long before lawmakers even have an inkling whether a $42 million cut is reasonable.

The release from the governor's office also indicates that the plan is still subject to approval by individual universities' governing boards.

If the arrangement does make it through the legislative process intact, it's unclear what would be cut or exactly how students would be affected. The deal specifically allows for tuition hikes on out-of-state and graduate students.
One of the most frustrating aspects of autism for doctors and parents is the lack of a definitive tool for diagnosing the developmental disorder in children.

Now, researchers at the University of Missouri at Columbia report some early results that point to a potential testing method involving the pupil of the eye.

Using changes in light, the researchers compared the pupil response times of children with autism to a control group of other children.

The pupils of young people who had previously been diagnosed with autism were slower to constrict when presented with a flash of light.

The test was 92.5 percent accurate in predicting which children had autism, researchers said.

Researchers had hypothesized that pupil response is connected to other areas in the brain that are affected by autism. Their hypothesis was based on animal research that connected pupil reflexes to neurological pathways.

"We found it's a possibility that those parts of the brain may be affected by light," said Gang Yao, associate professor of biological engineering. "Because autism is so complicated and can affect many different areas of the brain, we thought maybe there is something wrong in the pupillary light reflex in children (with autism). You can clearly see the difference."

Yao cautioned that the study results are very preliminary and include an extremely small sample size.

The study included 24 people ages 6 to 20 who had been diagnosed with autism and a control group of 44 people.
Another drawback of the study is that the group with autism all had similar diagnoses. Autism is considered a spectrum disorder that can vary widely in how it affects people. It's not known yet if the pupil reacts the same in people with all types of autism.

Yao worked with Xiaofei Fan, a postdoctoral fellow; child health professor Judith Miles; and Nicole Takahashi, a senior research specialist at MU's Thompson Center for Autism and Neurological Disorders.

Their research was published in the Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders.

The group received a grant last month from the National Institutes of Health to expand the study over the next couple of years to include more children and a more diverse range of autism diagnoses.

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COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

MU research shows promising results in treating prostate cancer

Thursday, November 19, 2009 | 12:01 a.m. CST

BY Christina Shimer

COLUMBIA — MU researchers have made a discovery that could change the way prostate cancer is surgically removed — even after tumors have become enlarged.

According to a news release from the MU School of Medicine, the new treatment has been effective in using engineered radioactive gold nanoparticles to reduce the size of prostate cancer tumors in mice.

Co-principal investigators Kattesh Katti and Raghuraman Kannan, with the MU School of Medicine’s radiology department, have been studying the treatment for four years and are currently in the process of applying clinical trials on humans.

"We're encouraged by the results of this study and its implications," Katti said in a news release. "Reduction in tumor volume has a direct impact on the effectiveness of chemotherapy and immunotherapy in a cancer patient, and it (has) also been associated with slowing down a cancer's metastasis and invasion."

Prostate cancer is second to lung cancer as the most deadly cancer in men. The American Cancer Society estimates that 192,280 men are diagnosed with prostate cancer each year in the U.S.; of those, 27,360 men will die if not treated early.

Katti and Kannan's study of a radioactive gold nanoparticle, GA-$^{198}$ AuNP, showed an 82 percent reduction of tumors in mice after a single dose was administered. Their results appeared in the international journal Nanomedicine: Nanotechnology, Biology and Medicine.

"There are limited clinical interventions for treating advanced stage prostate and pancreatic cancers," said Debabrata Mukhopadhyay, professor of biochemistry and molecular biology at the Mayo Clinic. "Therapeutic efficacy of radioactive gold nanoparticles, as demonstrated in animal models by Dr. Katti and Dr. Kannan, present realistic potential for clinical translation for use in cancer patients."

As stated in the news release, there have been limited to no side effects from the injected dose, which has been a challenge presented by other prostate cancer treatments that target the tumor vasculature, or blood vessel network.
"Even though these agents are effective, many times their size doesn't match up with the size of the tumor blood vessels, which can cause the therapeutic agents to leak out significantly," Kannan said in a press release. "This reduces the effectiveness of the treatment in killing tumor cells. However, our agent is a perfect fit for the porous tumor vasculature, leading to little or no side effects."

According to the release, the MU Research Reactor is one of the only sites worldwide that has the ability to create gold nanoparticles. In 2006, Katti received a prostate cancer grant that made MU one of 12 universities able to participate in the National Cancer Institute's national nanotechnology platform partnership.

Faculty members with the Research Reactor, the College of Veterinary Medicine and chemistry department collaborated on the project. Grants from the National Institutes of Health, Nanoparticle Biochem Inc. and the Missouri Life Sciences Research Board as well as private endowment funded the project.

The research was discussed Wednesday during a Missouri Nano Frontiers symposium at the Christopher S. Bond Life Science Center.
Former congressman Kenny Hulshof isn't letting his unsuccessful attempt to lead the University of Missouri system keep him out of University Hall.

Public records obtained by The Associated Press show that Hulshof has met with university president Gary Forsee at least three times in recent months at Forsee's campus office. Both men declined to discuss the private sessions.

Hulshof was one of three finalists for the four-campus system's top job in 2007. University curators later hired Forsee after their preferred candidate from the initial three finalists declined the job.

Hulshof is a Columbia Republican and former special state prosecutor who spent six terms in Congress. He won the Republican nomination for governor in 2008, but lost in the general election to Democrat Jay Nixon.
Student arrested on suspicion of assaulting MU police officer

By Andrew Denney
November 18, 2009 | 5:14 p.m. CST

COLUMBIA — An MU student was arrested early Sunday on Francis Quadrangle after a short foot chase by an MU police officer. The suspect is accused of assaulting the officer.

James Nelson Guirl, 21, who lives in Schurz Hall, was arrested on suspicion of third-degree assault of a police officer, resisting arrest and second-degree sexual misconduct. Guirl is an MU senior.

MU Police Chief Jack Watring said that at about 1:20 a.m. Sunday, there was a call made from an emergency phone near the northwest corner of Jesse Hall in which a female was screaming, “Send the police.”

Watring said an officer arrived at Jesse Hall within two minutes and did not find a female. Searching the area, he encountered four males and one female heading south through the quadrangle.

The officer saw two males — one of them identified as Guirl — climb onto the concrete base of one of the pillars of the MU Columns and begin to urinate on the landmark, Watring said.

According to Watring, the officer approached the group, and the two males fled. The officer pursued them and caught up to Guirl a few times, but the officer said Guirl kept slipping away. The officer restrained Guirl on the ground and prepared to place him in handcuffs, but the suspect turned around and “purposefully” elbowed the officer in the face, Watring said.

The final time the officer caught up to Guirl, the officer used pepper spray and took him into custody.
Watring said the officer reported Guirl was intoxicated during the incident. The report did not indicate if the officer sought medical assistance.

Guirl was held on $1,500 bond and was released later Sunday after the bond was paid, according to the Boone County Jail.

Guirl declined to comment on the incident Wednesday afternoon.

Watring said it was unlikely that Guirl or anyone else in the group placed the false emergency call, because they had entered the Francis Quadrangle from the northeast, through the archway by Walter Williams Hall.

Watring said, while it is not uncommon for false calls to come in from campus emergency, the devices are still "handy" in case a victim has lost or does not own a cell phone and is in need of assistance.

"You never know when it's going to be one the legitimate calls where someone needs help," Watring said.
Former UM counsel gets a new position

Wednesday, November 18, 2009

Gov. Jay Nixon has appointed the former general counsel of the University of Missouri System to the governing board of the University of Central Missouri in Warrensburg.

Bunky Wright:
Appointed to Warrensburg position

Bunky Wright’s term began Nov. 6 and expires in 2015. Wright, a Democrat from Columbia, retired from his 40-year association with the UM System at the end of 2007. He served as the system’s top attorney for 10 years.

Wright replaces Larry Fick of Columbia, whose term on the Warrensburg governing board ended in July. Fick previously served as president of the UCM board of governors.

Nixon also appointed to the governors board Mary Dandurand, a Democrat from Warrensburg.