Forsee: Univ. of Mo. May Consider 3-Year Degree

Missouri system mulls 3-year degree, local partnerships as campuses brace for more budget cuts

By ALAN SCHER  The Associated Press  COLUMBIA, Mo.

Add the University of Missouri to the growing number of schools considering three-year undergraduate degrees to reduce college costs.

University of Missouri President Gary Forsee told anxious employees Wednesday that the gloomy economy and continued lack of adequate state support will force the four-campus system to consider the option of a "no-frills degree."

He cautioned that the idea of a truncated undergraduate degree program is merely for discussion's sake — at least for now. There is no specific proposal on the table.

"People just can't afford to waste time and money anymore," Forsee told about 100 people on the Columbia campus at the final in a series of town hall budget meetings for students, professors and campus workers. "There's a national appetite to get through faster ... and finish cheaper."

Three years of undergraduate education is the norm in Europe, but so far only a handful of U.S. schools, including Bates College in Maine and Ball State University in Indiana, have followed suit.

Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon has said that statewide higher education spending must be cut by about $50 million in the coming fiscal year, a relatively minor hit compared to some cash-strapped states.

California, for example, has approved a 32 percent fee increase for students attending that state's top public schools. Those increases come on top of 20 percent spending cuts and enrollment cuts.

Nixon struck a deal with Forsee and other higher education leaders that calls for tuition and academic fees at Missouri's public four-year schools to remain frozen at current rates for the
second consecutive year. The pact is subject to approval by state lawmakers, who return to Jefferson City next month.

Forsee also talked about other cost-saving approaches Wednesday, including pursuit of new ways to finish delayed construction projects. The university system has seen its efforts to get state money for capital construction projects such as a new cancer research center in Columbia repeatedly fall short in recent years.

Forsee said he will return to Columbia, Kansas City, St. Louis and Rolla in early 2010 to meet with civic leaders about possible public-private partnerships.

He said that it's time to move past "the old-fashioned way of waiting for the state .. or relying on donors" to help pay for big-ticket construction projects.

The former Sprint Nextel CEO, who is nearing completion of his second year leading the university, also spoke publicly for the first time about the controversy surrounding his request that federal lawmakers from Missouri oppose climate change legislation.

Displaying a PowerPoint slide entitled "Lost in Translation," Forsee said that his concern about proposed cap-and-trade legislation was driven by his desire to protect the university's fiscal resources, not partisan politics.

His translation of the letter, which was subsequently criticized by student protesters and several Democratic members of Congress: "We have no money. Give us some help."

Paul Pitchford, an educational leadership and policy analysis professor, credited Forsee's steady hand in the midst of what he called "a mess."

"I have confidence in what our president is doing," he said. "He has made measured responses based on the data at hand."

Pitchford was more skeptical about the suggested three-year degree, a shift whose boosters include U.S. Sen. Lamar Alexander, a former Tennessee governor, federal education secretary and University of Tennessee president.

"We have a responsibility to provide a comprehensive education for our students," Pitchford said. "I'm afraid a three-year degree might get in the way of that."

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UM’s four campuses have all dropped in U.S. News rankings over last 6 years — should we care?
By: Kavita Kumar

And now let's talk about one of the dirtiest words in higher education: rankings. And in particular, the U.S. News & World Report college rankings. Ah yes, a college president's favorite topic.

College administrators love to hate the rankings — and are usually armed with a list of reasons of why they are an imperfect measurement of a university's worth. But when a school does well in the rankings, or moves up the list, I've found that many of those same administrators don't hesitate to brag about it.

Which brings me to the University of Missouri’s Board of Curators. Members of the board have often bemoaned the university’s fall in the rankings over the years. Of particular concern to some has been the drop of the Columbia campus, which was at #73 in the 2004 edition, but which has since plummeted to #102 in the 2010 edition.

Curators are apparently concerned enough about the issue that the rankings are an agenda item at this week's board meeting to be held at UMSL. I glanced at the PowerPoint presentation that will be delivered tomorrow to the board’s academic, student and external affairs committee. Here are some observations I’ve drawn from the presentation, coupled with some insight I’ve gained into the rankings over the years:

- UMSL has the dubious distinction of having the lowest ranking of the four campuses, most recently at #209. But the campus has one thing to brag about: it's the only one of the four campuses to have held fairly steady at its spot since 2004 (when it was #207). The rest of the campuses have had steeper falls. (Missouri S&T was #112 in 2004, but is now #128. And UMKC was #157 in 2004, but has since sunk to #186.)
- In terms of sub-categories used to come up with the overall rankings, the University of Missouri’s campuses have done worse in those areas — such as class sizes and student/faculty ratio — that tend to be based more on financial resources. That’s probably not surprising since the state’s public colleges receive less state funding today than they did in 2001 and 2002. At the same time, they have had to pay for inflationary costs and grapple with higher enrollments.
- The four campuses have dropped just slightly in the category of peer assessment — which makes up 25 percent of the score and which is one of the most controversial categories. It is based solely on a survey sent to hundreds of college administrators
around the country. It's often compared to a popularity contest or beauty pageant. Some university presidents have begun to revolt against this category by refusing to fill out the survey in recent years. Missouri Baptist’s Alton Lacey and Blackburn College’s Miriam Pride, are among the renegades who just say no to the survey.

- The four UM campuses, with the exception of UMKC, have kept fairly steady or done better since 2004 in their ranking on retention and graduation rates, which makes up 25 percent of the score.
- Another glimmer of hope is in the category of alumni giving. All four campuses increased their ranking in this category between 2004 and 2010. The biggest improvement was MU, which went from 170th to 66th in this category. (But one caveat is that this category has often been criticized as being the easiest for schools to improve on — or to manipulate, if you have more cynical view — since the category looks at the percentage of alumni who give back, and not at how much money those alumni are donating. So schools can work to improve this measure, for example, by soliciting more $5 donations from a larger number of alumni.)

So what does the university conclude from all of this?

"U.S. News focuses on prestige over efficiency, access, and affordability,” the first bullet point on one of the final slides says.

The school notes that the rankings do not emphasize efficiencies, but rather rewards schools for spending more. And it notes that the campuses have held steady or done better in those areas that it really cares about such as graduation and retention rates, mean GPA, and selectivity.

The final conclusion is that the university would be better served to use UM President Gary Forsee’s accountability measures he’s put into place, rather than to measure itself based on the U.S. News rankings.

While this discussion may make some people feel better about the university’s slippage in the rankings, I’m sure it will not appease everyone who hates to see the state’s land-grant and flagship university fall further down the list.

Because regardless or whether you love or hate the rankings, it’s hard to dispute their influence. And while other alternatives to the U.S. News rankings have popped up, U.S. News is still the one that most people pay attention to. The curators, included.

The Grade is the St. Louis region’s premier blog on education and child welfare. To read other recent posts, go to www.stltoday.com/thegrade.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Anti-inflammatories may undermine vaccines, according to study

By Larissa Dalton
December 10, 2009 | 12:01 a.m. CST

COLUMBIA – Mid-Missourians may want to think twice about following a nurse’s advice to take Tylenol or aspirin for that sore shoulder after getting a flu vaccine.

A recent study suggests that taking anti-inflammatories could limit the effectiveness of H1N1 vaccines and others.

Vaccines work by prompting the body to produce antibodies – proteins that disable viruses and jump-start the immune system. The introduction of these proteins gives the body the defenses to fight specific viruses.

The problem arises when a vaccine and anti-inflammatory medications are introduced together, according to research done by Charles Brown and three other researchers. Brown is a part of MU’s Department of Veterinary Pathobiology and Department of Molecular Microbiology and Immunology.

Medicines like aspirin, ibuprofen and acetaminophen are all anti-inflammatory drugs that block certain antibodies and enzymes in order to stop pain and swelling. Protective antibodies that are supposed to be produced from a vaccine could be significantly limited by these medications, according to the research.

“This is not to say that no antibodies will be made when these enzymes are blocked, but the levels may not be high enough to provide complete protection,” Brown said.

In other words, the research suggests that the medications could limit the efficacy of vaccines in general, including the H1N1 vaccine.

“It appears to be a general mechanism and so would likely apply to all vaccines,” Brown said.
There is no difference in effect between the nasal spray or shot vaccine, and so far, the amount of time a person has regularly taken aspirin doesn't seem to matter.

“This has not specifically been studied, but it is likely to make no difference. It appears that taking the drugs is only critical around the time of vaccine administration,” Brown said.

As always, people should contact their doctors with any questions about the H1N1 and other vaccines, and about any medications.
University veteran dies unexpectedly

By Janese Heavin

Wednesday, December 9, 2009

A former development officer for the University of Missouri and Stephens College died unexpectedly Sunday. Lynn Russell was 65.

Russell, the wife of UM System Vice President David Russell, served as director of development at Stephens College in 1991 and later as director of external relations and marketing for MU’s College of Engineering. Earlier in her career, she was director of public information at the Rolla campus.

Friends and former co-workers described Russell as a caring and loving person.

“On any level of my relationship with her, whether in work or friendship, she was an absolute joy to be around,” said Chris Koukola, assistant to the chancellor for university affairs.

“She was a leader for helping others and a leader at work. She’s the greatest friend you could have — that’s how I think of her. I can’t believe she’s gone.”

Barbara Breen, fiscal officer for the Office of Vice Chancellor for Research at MU, worked with Russell in the College of Engineering and also was a close friend.

In her professional role at MU, Russell “had to work with all different kinds of people from all different levels, both internally and externally,” Breen said. “She was just very down-to-earth and very likeable.”

Koukola praised Russell for getting involved in service and volunteer projects. Russell was involved in numerous civic and social organizations, including serving until her death as vice president of Columbia City Union, King’s Daughters and Sons.

Carole Bable, a Columbia resident and state president, said Russell was extremely dedicated and involved in the organization. “She was very supportive of both our local and our state projects,” Bable said. “Lynn was a very fun-loving and dedicated person, very compassionate.”

Russell earned a bachelor’s degree in journalism and a master’s in education from MU. Her family has established the Lynn W. Russell Memorial Scholarship Fund at the Missouri School of Journalism in her honor.

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Lynn Waggoner Russell

Lynn Waggoner Russell spent a lot of energy giving back in everything she did.

She was the president of the Columbia branch of the City Union of the King’s Daughters, presiding over the area’s 30 chapters and nearly 700 members.

A basset hound enthusiast, she also was on the board of directors of the Columbia Kennel Club. She owned two basset hounds, Sirius and Malcolm.

"She devoutly loved the work she did with the organizations and gave a good deal of time there," said her husband, David R. Russell. "She loved the relationships she developed over time there."

Mrs. Russell died Sunday, Dec. 6, 2009. She was 65.

She was born Dec. 16, 1943, to Malcolm and Hazel (Hampton) Waggoner.

Mrs. Russell was exposed to MU at a young age from her father, a football player, and earned bachelor of journalism and master of education degrees there. She also had 33 doctoral credit hours with the College of Education’s department of educational leadership and policy analysis.

Mrs. Russell started off her professional life as a reporter for the Rolla Daily News in 1971 before beginning a long career in the University of Missouri System.

It was then that she started working in the public information office at the University of Missouri-Rolla, now known as the Missouri University of Science and Technology. She eventually became a special assistant to the chancellor and director of public affairs.

But she was most proud of her work as an event coordinator for the Remmers Lecture Series, a program through which she brought public figures such as former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to Rolla to discuss world events in a small-town setting.

"Her most amusing experience was when (Secretary of Defense) Caspar Weinberger came to the lecture," David Russell said. "He was on a very tight schedule, had to fly in from Washington, D.C., to St. Louis, drive to Rolla, give the lecture, and turn around and head back to Washington."

The plan was fine until the secretary of defense’s plane was delayed.

"They threw him in the back of a limousine with Lynn," Russell said. "As the driver broke the speed limit trying to get him there on time, she was feeding him cold hot dogs and wishing he had made more time to get down there without the stress."
David and Lynn Russell met in Rolla. David Russell was a colonel in the Army at the time, working as director of public affairs at Fort Leonard Wood while Lynn was the special assistant to the chancellor.

"My general and her chancellor would have to get together from time to time, and we'd have to coordinate their visits," David Russell said. "Pretty soon we came to like hanging out together."

The two were wed Oct. 27, 1990.

Mrs. Russell eventually returned to Columbia in 1991 to become the director of development at Stephens College. After a stint there, she worked for about two years as the first development officer at the University of Missouri Press, where she became good friends with Beverly Jarrett, then-director and editor in chief.

"She was a wonderful human — very good-natured, happy person, and a hard worker," Jarrett said. "We always felt like she was supportive of the press, she was somebody who believed in the press and believed in the work we were doing."

Mrs. Russell left to become an executive staff assistant at the MU School of Social Work but stayed on the Missouri Press Board of Development for a number of years after, and stayed in contact with Jarrett.

"She and I used to talk 'gobbledygook' to each other after she left," Jarrett said. "It was a funny little accent we'd use to let each other know it was that one calling. She was just a great person."

Mrs. Russell retired three years ago from the MU College of Engineering, where she was the director of external relations.

"She had a fabulous sense of humor," said Susan Wampler, who succeeded Mrs. Russell as director of external relations. "You could always count on Lynn to lighten up the situation. She loved to play practical jokes."

Mrs. Russell is survived by her husband; two stepsons, Christian Russell of Irvine, Calif., and Jeremy Russell of Denver; and two grandchildren, Kaleb and Gavin Russell.

Her parents died earlier.

Private services will be held Friday at Riverview Cemetery in Jefferson City.

A tribute reception will be held from 10 a.m. to noon Saturday in Stotler Lounge in Memorial Union.

The family asks that gifts be made to the Lynn W. Russell Memorial Scholarship Fund at the School of Journalism through the Office of Development in 103 Neff Hall, Columbia, MO 65211-1200
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

New MU organization advocates for student parents

By Ben Wieder
December 10, 2009 | 12:01 a.m. CST

COLUMBIA — Mornings start early for Kristy Ensley. The 23-year-old MU senior is up between 4:30 and 5 a.m. to get her two children, Jasmine and Jayden, ready to leave at 6 for their hour or so drive to Columbia from California, Mo.

Ensley hopes to graduate in May with a degree in biology and has applied to MU's accelerated nursing program. If accepted, she will begin in June.

For now, she'd like to find a study partner. At the mention of her children, her classmates shy away.

"As soon as I say that," Ensley said, "no one wants to study with me."

Ensley is part of a group of MU student parents who joined forces this summer to address challenges unique to their population. They've adopted the acronym MIZFIT, which stands for Mizzou Families Involved Together, but the "misfit" implication of the name is intentional.

Student parents feel isolated from the student body at large and from each other, said Julie Shea, director of the Student Parent Center, a day care facility for MU students. And because of their family responsibilities, their time is extremely limited.

"We want to be able to support each other," Ensley said.

To this end, MIZFIT, which was recently formally recognized as a student organization, has created a Facebook group, MIZFIT at MU, to connect student parents and share resources.
The group also aims to increase awareness of the student-parent population at MU and its particular needs. "Student parents don't have the opportunity to speak up for themselves," Shea said.

**The numbers**

The challenge is compounded by the fact that no one knows exactly how many MU students are also parents. The university does not track the number of parents on campus, MU spokesman Christian Basi said.

Financial aid forms, such as the Free Application for Federal Student Financial Aid, ask for information about student dependents because family size does play a role in determining student aid eligibility. Jim Brooks, director of the MU Office of Student Aid, confirmed that the office does not track the number of students who report dependents.

On a national level, student parents account for nearly 12 percent of undergraduates at four-year public universities and colleges, and they comprise nearly 30 percent of graduate and professional students at public institutions, according to a 2007-08 study by the U.S. Department of Education.

If MU's student-parent population corresponded to the national average, this would translate to more than 2,500 undergraduate student parents and nearly 2,000 graduate or professional student parents, according to university enrollment numbers in 2007 and 2008.

There is no evidence to suggest that MU's student parent enrollment is this large, but there is no evidence to the contrary, either. The uncertainty makes planning for student parents difficult, Ensley said, because "we don't know what we're dealing with."

**Campus support**

Support services for student parents are decentralized on campus, which means that student parents may have markedly different experiences depending on their field of study.
Nicholas Gage, MIZFIT's president, is a doctoral student in the department of special education. Gage, 29, said he made the importance of his two children, 6-year-old River Preston-Gage and 4-year-old Scout Preston-Gage, clear to his department.

"I said to my adviser, 'I have two little kids; they're first priority,'" Gage said.

His adviser replied that they should be.

Gage, a self-described "perpetual student," encountered some difficulties when he previously studied for a master's degree in the Harry S Truman School of Public Affairs. He then developed his own approach to balance child care needs and group meetings with classmates.

"I'd say, 'You have to come to my house for dinner,'" Gage said.

Support from the English department and the women's and gender studies departments has been "fantastic" for the most part, said Naomi Clark, a doctoral student and new mother who is a member of MIZFIT.

But friends of hers in MU's School of Law have developed an "underground system for determining who is a family-friendly faculty member and who isn't," Clark said.

Part of the problem is scheduling. Many classes and help sessions are scheduled for the evening, Ensley said, when MU day care is not available.

Clark, Ensley and Gage all use the Student Parent Center, which closes at 5 p.m. "A lot of parents struggle with that," Gage said, referring to the closing time.

Another concern is the cost. Gage pays between $1,300 and $1,400 each month for day care for his two children. "And that's cheap," he said.

Space is also limited; the day care is licensed for 44 children. Shea, the center's director, keeps a waiting list for interested student parents.

Still, students who use the facility appreciate what it offers.

"Having her nearby is huge," Clark said of her daughter, Liberty Faye Clark, who is 9 months old. "It's something that I wish other parents could have."
Family living situations

The Student Parent Center is housed on the ground floor of one of the University Village apartment buildings, which are managed by Residential Life. The center is operated by Student Auxiliary Services, which rents space from Residential Life, said Frankie Minor, director of Residential Life.

Minor said renovations of University Village and the two other family-friendly student apartment complexes — University Heights and Tara Apartments — are long overdue. Combined, these three complexes house about 40 MU families with children, he said.

Minor said the most recent significant renovations of University Village or University Heights were 12 years ago. He hopes to develop a long-range renovation or replacement plan for University Student Apartments along the lines of the Residential Life Master Plan for residential halls that most recently yielded three renovated midcampus dorms.

“You’ve been trying to do this for the last five years,” he said.

It’s unclear when or how renovations will occur.

In the past, renovations have proceeded one building at a time, but renovating all three facilities at once would allow for economies of scale, Minor said, with reduced costs for materials and services.

If University Village were to be closed for renovations, it isn’t clear where the Student Parent Center would be located and renovation plans wouldn’t necessarily include a new day care facility.

“We can help contribute,” Minor said, “but we can’t fully fund it.”

Parent community

Beyond day care services, the Student Parent Center creates a sense of community among parents, Gage said. He and other parents celebrate their children’s birthdays, have Halloween parties and coordinate trips to events such as the Hartsburg Pumpkin Festival, Gage said.

“I’ve made a lot of friends through my kids having friends,” Gage said.
Clark said that, historically, the university has been designed for single, unattached students. And nontraditional students have different social needs, she said.

"Friday night, I'm thinking about what am I going to feed my kid," Gage said.

MIZFIT's organizers hope to extend this sense of community to other parents on campus, but the organization aims to have more practical benefits, also, Clark said, such as facilitating networking and child care swaps.

"For these kinds of relationships to exist," Clark said, "there has to be some kind of awareness of each other and a sense of security."

**Future support**

MIZFIT may be aided in its goal by a new Web site called Project Student-Parent Success, which is being developed by ParentLink, an MU College of Education program that provides support to families across the state, with special attention paid to "high-need families," said Carol Mertensmeyer, ParentLink's director.

With a grant from MU's Interdisciplinary Innovations Fund, ParentLink is working with MU students to develop and market a Ning network, a social networking Web site that allows for various specialized subcommunities within the site.

The site would provide e-mentoring — connecting student parents and experts on campus — and research-based articles as well as opportunities for parents to connect with and support each other, said Patrick Lockwood, a senior psychology student at MU who has helped coordinate the project.

This support could take the form of child care and clothing swaps, as well as sharing tips on academic resources, health care or even family-friendly restaurants, Mertensmeyer said.

ParentLink hopes to roll out the Web site at MU this spring and plans to connect to the other three campuses in the University of Missouri System soon after, he said.

Mertensmeyer eagerly anticipates the release of the site.
“All of our audiences will benefit from a site like this,” Mertensmeyer said. “To think about how you can bring together academics with clothes swapping, that’s what I get excited about.”
From here to happy

By Marcia Vanderlip  Wednesday, December 9, 2009

If you catch Mary Hendrickson's cell phone voice mail, you will hear: “Remember, eating local makes you happy.” She's right. Moreover, having locally produced food in public schools would make a lot of folks happier and a lot of kids healthier, but getting there will require collaboration, education and — not to put too fine a point on it — greater leadership, energetic and effective leadership.

Hendrickson is director of the Food Circles Networking Project for University of Missouri Extension, and she's a good example of a leader who shows initiative. She and others, including Bill McKelvey of the Healthy Lifestyles Initiative at MU Extension, coordinated the Farm-to-School Stakeholders Summit last Wednesday, drawing nearly 100 educators, farmers, food distributors, not-for-profit groups such as Slow Food Katy Trail, school officials, food service directors and even insurance agents from all corners of Missouri. The session served as training for Extension educators working to facilitate farm-to-school connections around the state.

Laina Fullum, director of food services for Columbia Public Schools, made contacts with distributors and farmers and left the meeting feeling “hopeful” about getting farm-fresh food into schools. We’ll be watching to see how that hope translates into action.

For Jan Mees, Columbia Board of Education president, the exercise was “enlightening.” She had previously thought “farm-to-school meant you work with one producer. The marketing, processing and all parts of the continuum to achieve this” are “more complex than I imagined.” She also considers costs and liability issues to be obstacles but believes collaboration among genuinely interested parties “could control these factors.”

School board member Michelle Pruitt left puzzled, wanting “a more clear vision of what local farm-to-school means,” though she was glad Fullum might have found some connections to help her “in her job.”

Some misconceptions were corrected. Although some farmers didn’t know some schools actually have workable kitchens, many food service folks didn’t realize farmers were willing and able to fill their orders.

In any event, business cards were exchanged.

Although the summit, Hendrickson said, was meant to begin this dialogue and to promote these connections, some left the meeting at the Columbia/Boone County Department of Public Health and Human Services somewhat discouraged. Angela Hemwall of Pierpont Farms was ambivalent. As the parent of children who attend Columbia Public Schools, she said her first
concern is getting real food and experienced cooks into school kitchens. She and others remain perplexed as to why school lunch employees can't get a class in knife skills to cut up apples for oatmeal. I'm guessing that the culinary arts folks at the Columbia Area Career Center could offer an in-service to equip their colleagues for greater accomplishment in the kitchen.

That said, Hemwall also was among those who were encouraged by success stories: Thanks to a pilot program grant — a $248,000 Farm to School grant to Saint Louis University from the Missouri Foundation for Health — students in the Maplewood Richmond Heights School District are getting healthy, local food. In addition, college students are gaining business and culinary experience. This modest success required coordinated effort from university leaders, a congressman, a farmer's union and the families of the students at the schools. Students actually had a hand in selecting recipes for healthy school menus.

Such efforts and others around the country could become models for how our schools proceed. We could start with local salad bars for lunch and healthy oatmeal bars for breakfast, and go from there. All we need now is more energetic leadership in this effort to get happy.

Marcia Vanderlip is the Tribune's food editor. Reach her at mvanderlip@columbiatribune.com or 815-1704.

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Curators embrace Twitter
Board launches instant updates.

By Janese Heavin

Wednesday, December 9, 2009

The University of Missouri System’s Board of Curators has hopped on the Twitter train and plans to send bite-size updates from this week’s meeting in St. Louis to constituents around the state.

Curators first began “tweeting” during the October meeting in Columbia. About 50 employees, media outlets and students signed up to receive the updates, including Beth Hammock, director of communications for MU’s development office.

“I liked it for the brevity and clarity of it,” she said. “What the Board of Curators does is important to my work, so I like to stay on top of it.”

Twitter is a privately owned, free Web site that lets users post 140-character messages to let their followers know, in real time, what’s happening. Followers with Twitter accounts can elect to receive tweets on their computers or on mobile devices such as cell phones.

The Board of Curators posts messages under the handle “umcurators” and will do so from the Friday meeting at UM-St. Louis. The meeting starts at 9 a.m. in the Millennium Student Center. A work session is scheduled for tomorrow.

As you might suspect, though, curators don’t actually tweet for themselves. That duty falls to Assistant Communications Director Jennifer Hollingshead and Web Coordinator Michael P. Hill. In October, the duo tag-teamed to update the curators’ Twitter page roughly every minute.

During the normal, four-hour Friday meeting, they posted more than 100 tweets.

The board signed on to Twitter to provide another level of accessibility for those unable to attend curators meetings, held quarterly at all four campuses, Hollingshead said.

“We’ve been doing live audio streams for a while, but that requires somebody to be stationed at their computer, or the archives require somebody to go back and take time to listen to it,” she said. “This allows people to be out and going through the normal course of their day, then get updates about information relevant to them.”

The Twitter site also allows Hill and Hollingshead to link to outside resources. That helped constituents follow along when curators referenced a particular document, Hill said.
"It provided another level of interaction," he said. "As topics came up — whether it was a presentation or a curator making reference to a presentation or a story that had been in the news — we linked to that so people who were interested had an additional resource."

The UM System also has a Twitter page, which refers more than 400 followers to university-related news.

“We’ve heard from a lot of users,” Hill said. “They appreciate the transparency and comprehensiveness of it.”

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Copenhagen climate summit draws St. Louis-area, Missouri residents

By Kim McGuire

These days, you can find Frank Lorberbaum scooting around Copenhagen on an electric bicycle, one of the green modes of transportation the Danish city is providing to the thousands of climate change conference attendees.

Lorberbaum, a St. Louis builder and environmental activist, found the bikes to be wonderfully helpful when pedaling.

"I also learned that Copenhageners — although friendly and well meaning — give terrible directions," Lorberbaum said.

Lorberbaum is one of a handful of St. Louis-area and Missouri residents who are in Copenhagen mingling among scientists, government officials and environmental activists.

Or in Lorberbaum’s case, he is among the thousands that are there pushing for a meaningful climate change accord.

"My goal is to find out the position of other countries and report back," said Lorberbaum, who is a local green building advocate. "I also hope to be able to influence the stance of U.S. role players."

Mike Urban and Mark Cowell, University of Missouri associate professors of geography, are in Copenhagen representing the Association of American Geographers.

Urban described the atmosphere as "electric," particularly at the Bella Center, the conference center where the talks are taking place. "There are a number of protesters here that are making their presence heard just outside the Bella Center," Urban said. "So far, everyone has been civil and seems to be behaving."
Urban noted the criticism being directed at the United States for not committing to emission caps or taking a larger role in the worldwide effort to combat global warming. Still, the U.S. delegation is making the rounds, talking about what steps have been taken, he said.

On Monday, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced it had determined that greenhouse gases threaten human health and the environment, an important step toward regulating emissions linked to global warming.

Tony Calandro, who works in St. Louis for Vox Global, a Washington-based public affairs firm, is participating in an event Friday called "Climate Change and the Economy: Opportunities for growth through low-carbon technology."

He described some of the activity outside the Bella Center such as that in "Hopenhagen," the town square where a ten-story globe has been built.

"First, Copenhagen is probably the ideal city to host this conference — it's committed to being the first carbon-neutral capital by 2020," Calandro said. "Windmills dot the landscape. Many more are being built. The city supports a low-carbon economy, and it's very much in the public consciousness."

Despite the push for an accord at Copenhagen, climate change skeptics have seized upon the recent theft of e-mails that they say debunks the science supporting the case for man-made global warming. On Wednesday, the Americans for Prosperity sponsored viewings around the country of a live webcast from Copenhagen as part of their "Hot Air Tour," a move to "expose the cost of global warming extremism." One of the viewings was held at the Sheraton Clayton Plaza Hotel in Clayton.
Tug-of-war between job and school is No. 1 reason for college dropouts

The No. 1 reason many young adults drop out of college is that they can't juggle school and a job, according to a report released Wednesday.

When choosing between a degree and working full time, paying rent, buying groceries or supporting family members, many students are forced to drop out, said Jean Johnson of Public Agenda, a nonpartisan public policy research firm.

A survey of hundreds of people in their 20s reflects a "very, very different reality" than the common image most people have of college as "a place where a young person goes and they become an adult," Johnson said. "So many of them are already assuming adult responsibilities."

Public Agenda findings on dropouts hold true for the average 250 students who withdraw each semester from the University of Missouri-Kansas City without a degree.

In exit interviews over the last three semesters, 26 percent said they left UMKC because of conflicts between job and studies, said Mel Tyler, vice chancellor for student affairs.

"Students get used to a certain lifestyle, and they want to maintain that lifestyle while they are in school," Tyler said. "When they can't, they leave for the job."

"What is really amazing is they are not leaving because they are flunking out of here. Grades were at the bottom of the list as a reason for why they leave."

Although strides have been made in increasing access to higher education for low-income and minority students, Johnson said, many of them are leaving school without a degree or certificate.

Each fall, 2.8 million students enroll in some form of higher education, but fewer than half graduate within six years, according to the U.S. Education Department. At public community colleges, only 20 percent of students graduate within three years.

Tyler said UMKC's dropouts run the gamut from low- and middle-income to first generation undergraduates and graduate students.

The Public Agenda report is the first of three funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to examine access to college and college success.

Researchers found that students who drop out do not usually fit the Joe College stereotype: a student who debated which school to attend, lives on campus, attends class full time and has help paying bills.

For students who leave school, "the balancing act is not between going to class and attending football games and frat parties; it's more likely between going to class and punching a clock in order to pay rent," they wrote.
For these students, picking a school to attend is often a haphazard and uninformed process, the researchers wrote, and the top reasons the former students cited in choosing a college were location, class times and tuition rates.

Fewer than a third based their decision on the academic reputation of the school.

Of students surveyed, 58 percent said they did not receive financial help from relatives to pay tuition or fees, and 69 percent had no scholarships or financial aid.

When these students decided to drop out, 70 percent said they did so because they needed to work to support themselves. Other reasons for dropping out included not being able to afford tuition and fees, needing a break, classes that were not useful and needing more time to spend with family.

Many of these young adults told researchers they would consider going back to school, but a third said that even if their tuition and books were fully covered, they could not go back because they could not afford to support themselves.

The report suggests ways to make it easier for working students, including letting part-time students get financial aid, more classes at night and on weekends, reducing tuition and providing child care.

UMKC administrators hope exit interviews will help them create a profile of their dropouts and allow them to track these students to see how many of them re-enter school.

Tyler said UMKC also now offers financial counseling.

Students with other distractions, such as family responsibilities, are directed to campus social workers or community social service agencies for help.

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WASHINGTON (AP) — The Pell Grant program for needy college students is facing a massive shortfall as the country’s bleak job market drives people back to school.

An administration official told The Associated Press the program will cost $18 billion more than Congress and the White House had anticipated over the next three years. The official, who was not authorized to speak publicly about the budget, spoke on condition of anonymity.

"The administration is working with Congress to fill the gap, and we are committed to making sure the U.S. has an educated work force able to fill the jobs of the 21st century," said the official, who is not authorized to speak publicly about the budget.

Shortfalls and surpluses are common in the Pell Grant program, which forms the foundation for federal college aid. Anyone who is eligible gets a grant, making it difficult for the government to anticipate how many people will apply. Pell Grants typically go to families earning less than $40,000.

Yet the looming shortfall is the largest in the 36-year history of the program, whose entire budget was about $18 billion last year.

Lawmakers had approved a 13% increase in the maximum grant as part of President Barack Obama’s economic stimulus law. That boosted this year’s Pell Grant by $500 to $5,350. It was a huge increase; the maximum grant has grown on average by less than 6% a year.

The chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee, California Democratic Rep. George Miller, said lawmakers will work together to make sure the program is funded, "as we do every year."

Miller sees a silver lining in the shortfall.

"In this difficult economy, it is good news that more people are going back to school to get the skills they need for in-demand jobs," he said. "We want to make sure we are doing everything we can to help them in this effort."

White House Budget Director Peter Orszag and Education Secretary Arne Duncan had a meeting with Miller and other committee chairmen about the shortfall last week.

The Pell Grant program faced a smaller shortfall, about $6 billion, last year.

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