Missouri has three public colleges listed among the 100 Best Values announced by Kiplinger's Personal Finance.

Truman State at Kirksville comes in at No. 26 on the listing, with the University of Missouri-Columbia at No. 57 and Missouri University of Science and Technology at Rolla at No. 94.

Four-year public colleges are ranked according to academics as well as in-state and out-of-state costs. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill takes top honors, a spot it has held since Kiplinger's first rankings came out in 1998.

Kiplinger says private colleges have averaged almost $36,000 a year, while 39 of its Top 100 public colleges have average annual in-state tuitions of about $15,000.

Illinois had two public colleges on the Top 100 list. The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign is No. 45 and Illinois State University at Normal is 89.

For a full listing of the Top 100, visit kiplinger.com/reports/best-college-values/. The rankings include data on tuition costs, average debt, student-faculty ratio and admission rate.

Tags: colleges, Higher education, Illinois, Missouri, students, tuition
Senate resolution rejects tax cuts, hikes

by Bob Priddy on January 12, 2010

The movement has been started in the legislature to throw out a tax cut for Missouri farmers who have about 65 percent of Missouri's farmland.

Senator Bill Stouffer's resolution would reject a state tax commission proposal to increase productivity values on about 35 percent of Missouri farmland. The state tax commission says proposal, however, would reduce productivity values on 65 percent of farmland.

Missouri farmland is valued for its productivity rather than its market value. Productivity value is about 20% of market value.

Stouffer has trouble responding to questions about his planned rejection of the tax cuts but says this is no time for any tax increases. He does not want to say that he is recommending people in line for a tax cut should not get it.

The Farm Bureau support Stouffer's resolution, which needs to pass both houses of the General Assembly to block the commission recommendations. The commission made its recommendation in mid-December based on a 15-year study of average land values. The study was done for the commission by the University of Missouri's Food and Agriculture Policy Research Institute.

USDA figures show increased corn and production in Missouri in 2009. Corn production totalled 446,760 million bushels, up almost 65.2 million bushels from 2008. Average yield was 153 bushels per acre, up 15. The soybean harvest totaled 14.25 million bushels, an increase of 39.4 million from 2008 with an average yield of 43.5 bushels per acre, an increase of 5.5 bushels per acre from the 2008 crop.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

LETTER: Band mixup not that big of a deal

By Elizabeth and Ron Rimer, Columbia
January 12, 2010 | 9:34 a.m. CST

As a former Marching Mizzou member and the spouse of a former Marching Mizzou member and as fans who actually went to the Texas Bowl and, along with our close friends, attend all of the Mizzou football games no matter where they are being played, we are tired of reading the complaints from Navy-related people over their "hurt" feelings and the "disrespect" they felt (try being a Tiger if you want to learn about being disrespected.). You would have thought that Navy had lost the football game.

We have corrective and informative answers to all four people who submitted letters to the Missourian published in the Sunday paper, but we are not going to waste time rehashing what should be old news.

One comment we do have: As we left the game, we hope we didn't hear what we thought we heard — a voice coming over the loudspeaker saying "Today the United States of America can be proud... ." What was that comment about? We closed our ears afraid to hear anymore. The last time we looked, we do believe the University of Missouri is located in the United States of America, too.

Can Navy people just get over it? They won the football game — and it is just a football game — and the Navy players were not serving overseas on that day, they were playing college football.

The Mizzou players, coaches and fans are dealing with the loss and looking forward to next season. Maybe the Midshipmen fans and alumni need to look forward to what the players may face when they leave Annapolis. That is more important than complaining about a band mixup on both sides of the field.
JEFFERSON CITY — Want to get rid of the state’s 6 percent income tax and instead pay higher sales taxes on all goods and services?

That was the trade-off proposed Tuesday at a Senate workshop on a far-reaching proposal championed by retired financier Rex Sinquefield of St. Louis.

Supporters said the plan would boost economic growth and increase the state’s population. Critics argued that it would wreak havoc with the state budget and shift the tax burden to middle-income families.

Under the plan, Missouri would eliminate its personal income tax and corporate income tax and substitute a higher sales tax on a broadened tax base.

For example, the state would tax services such as medical care, child care and housekeeping. The state also would get rid of all its sales tax exemptions, which shield scores of purchases ranging from prescription drugs to farm machinery.

Supporters estimate that to produce the same amount of money that Missouri receives now, the state would have to raise its general fund sales tax rate to about 5.11 percent, from the current 3 percent.

But that is just an estimate, cautioned Joe Haslag, a University of Missouri economics professor who also works for Sinquefield’s think tank, the Show-Me Institute.

"I can’t sit here and tell you 5.11 percent is going to be the rate that’s going to generate exactly the same amount of revenue," Haslag said. He suggested giving the state the authority for short-term borrowing in case revenue fell short.
Sinquefield sent his former University of Chicago professor, economist Art Laffer of Nashville, Tenn., to testify.

Laffer said the nine states without income taxes were growing much more quickly than the states with the highest income tax rates.

"It's really basic economics," Laffer said. "You want a tax structure that does the least damage to your state. I mean, all taxes are bad."

That statement irked Sen. Joan Bray, D-University City. She said she was "happy to pay taxes," because they support needed services such as health care, libraries and schools.

The plan's critics said it would shift more than $7 billion in state taxes without a clear understanding of the consequences. Although those living in poverty would get subsidies to offset higher sales taxes, middle-income families could end up paying more.

The Missouri Budget Project, which advocates for low-income people, contended that the average middle-income family with two young children could pay an additional $2,439 a year under the plan.

Although supporters have dubbed it the "Fair Tax," whether that's true depends on how you would be affected, said Jim Moody, a lobbyist and former state budget director.

"A fair tax is a tax somebody else pays," he quipped.

He said health care providers would be among the biggest losers, because they would owe 5.11 percent tax on more than $2 billion in revenue.

If legislators endorse the tax change, state voters would have the final say because the plan would change the state constitution, which requires voter consent.