COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

UM tax mailing reveals student Social Security numbers

By Katy Bergen
January 19, 2010 | 6:04 p.m. CST

COLUMBIA — An e-mail sent Tuesday afternoon to University of Missouri System students who received a tax form warns that their Social Security numbers might have been visible in the envelope windows.

Form 1098-T reports tuition billed and paid.

The e-mail came from Nikki Krawitz, UM vice president for finance and administration. Krawitz said students affected might want to monitor their credit and provided links to a credit-monitoring service the university uses. Consumers of the service pay a monthly fee of $3.46.

The e-mail said in full:

January 19, 2010

Dear student:

Early last week, the University of Missouri mailed Internal Revenue Service 1098-T forms to our students via U.S. mail. On January 14th we became aware that, for some of the forms, the Social Security Number on the form was partially or fully viewable through the envelope window.

I am sending this letter to all students who received 1098-T forms since we do not know which students might have been affected. You can determine if your SSN was viewable by visually inspecting how your form aligns with the envelope window.

If your SSN was indeed viewable and you are concerned about the risk of identity theft, you may want to monitor your credit which can be accomplished by contacting
The university has an existing agreement with Experian to provide credit monitoring services at a discounted price. See http://www.umsystem.edu/ums/departments/hr/benefits/credit.shtml. We have also posted information about this issue on our Web site at http://www.umsystem.edu/taxformnotice/, which will be updated as needed. If you have additional questions please send an email to UMTaxFormNotice@umsystem.edu.

The security of our students' personal information is a top priority for us, and we deeply regret that this occurred. We are reviewing our processes and those of our vendors in an effort to prevent this from happening in the future.

Sincerely,

Natalie 'Nikki' Krawitz

Vice President for Finance & Administration
UM asks about its benefits

Employees to rank policies on survey.

By Janese Heavin

Tuesday, January 19, 2010

University of Missouri administrators plan to ask faculty and staff across the four-campus system in the coming weeks how much they value the pay and benefits they’re receiving.

The goal is to help the system identify which benefits are the most valuable to employees, UM System President Gary Forsee said in an e-mail to faculty and staff yesterday.

“This will help us get ideas on how to better maximize your satisfaction while being smart about our pay and benefits budget,” he wrote.

Although the system is bracing for a cut in state funding of as much as $21 million in the coming fiscal year, the survey is not about making budget cuts, Betsy Rodriguez, vice president of human resources, said this morning.

“It’s just about making sure we’re spending our money in a way employees value,” she said. “It’s not about cutting; it’s just a listening exercise.”

Hewitt Associates, an independent human resources consulting firm, will conduct the survey to keep responses confidential.

The survey won’t be posted online until later this month or early February. Rodriguez said employees will be asked how much they value their take-home pay in relation to other benefits, such as health or life insurance. Likewise, faculty and staff will be asked whether they prefer the current leave policy, which separates sick time, personal days and vacation, or if they’d rather have one pool of time off without having to label it.

Questions about domestic partnership benefits also will be on the survey, Rodriguez said.

That was encouraging to Leona Rubin, chairwoman of MU’s Faculty Council, which has supported same-sex benefits for years. The council’s diversity committee is exploring different types of benefit packages that would apply to same-sex couples, and the full council could see a recommendation as early as next month.
Rubin was hesitant to weigh in on the employee survey without seeing specific questions, but, she said, “I like the idea that they’re asking.”

The survey is part of an ongoing discussion about lagging faculty salaries. In August, Rodriguez spent five hours outlining employee pay and benefits to the UM Board of Curators.

“This is the piece that has been missing: What do employees value about benefits?” Rodriguez said. “This will give employees an opportunity to weigh in.”

Summarized results will be presented to curators in the future, but it’s too soon to know whether the findings will result in actual changes.

“I don’t necessarily see us spending less or more money, rather just making sure we’re spending appropriately,” Rodriguez said. “It could be more about shifting funding.”

Reach Janese Heavin at 573-815-1705 or e-mail jheavin@columbiatribune.com.
MU could see $10 million windfall by joining Big Ten

By Christopher Trino

Proponents of Big Ten expansion say doing so would help balance the conference's game schedules, attract greater media attention and pave the way for a lucrative conference football championship like the ones held by the Big 12, SEC and ACC conferences.

The University of Notre Dame, whose popular football team is not part of any conference, is considered by many to be the frontrunner Big Ten candidate. But Notre Dame turned down a Big Ten invitation in 1998, has its own national TV contract with NBC through 2015 worth a reported $9 million a year and has shown little interest in giving up its independent status.

Rutgers, Pittsburgh, Syracuse and Nebraska are among the other universities whose names are circulating as potential candidates. But Missouri has been widely discussed as the most likely choice after Notre Dame.

Missouri Athletic Director Mike Alden has played down a potential move and did not respond to a request for comment for this story. But Gov. Jay Nixon told the Associated Press in December that Mizzou should listen to any offer that might come from the Big Ten and consider the academic benefits as well as the athletic ones.

University of Missouri Chancellor Brady Deaton told the Kansas City Star last month that although Mizzou has not been contacted by the Big Ten, "should there be an official inquiry or invitation, we would evaluate it based upon what would be in the best interest of MU athletically and academically."
Teachers take lesson on preventing kids’ suicide

University of Missouri Professor Jim Koller hugs Del McMillen Tuesday after she finished sharing her story about losing her son Dennis, 44, to suicide. McMillen spoke at a seminar for teachers and counselors called “Training the Trainer.”

By Janese Heavin

Tuesday, January 19, 2010

They spend the bulk of the day with students, often building close relationships, but at the end of the day, teachers, administrators and support staff in public schools aren’t trained to prevent those kids from committing suicide.

Jim Koller has set out to change that. A University of Missouri professor emeritus who spent three years researching suicide prevention, Koller is sharing his findings with public school officials from across the state in the hope they will train others.

Koller’s “Train the Trainer” program is taking place today and tomorrow in Columbia. About 30 principals, counselors, nurses and teachers from Columbia Public Schools and neighboring districts are participating in the workshop.

Suicide is the third-leading cause of death for young people between 10 and 24, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It’s a local problem, too. Koller said he has put four Mid-Missouri third-graders on suicide watch recently and this summer helped stop nine local teens from going through with a suicide pact.

One problem, he said, is that school officials don’t know how to recognize warning signs. And school employees students feel most connected to — such as homeroom teachers, coaches and janitors — aren’t prepared to help students even if they do see red flags.

Kids “don’t tell the counselor; they tell the coach or the teacher they have a relationship with,” Koller said. “We need to teach them instead of having them pass the student off to the counselor.”

Schools and parents also need to get past social stigmas attached to suicide and suicidal tendencies, he said.

Columbia mom Del McMillen can vouch for that. Her son, Dennis, struggled with mental illnesses as a young adult, but social stigmas attached to those problems kept her husband from wanting to seek help for him.
After years of struggling with bipolar disorder, Dennis shot and killed himself in 1999.

McMillen shared her story with educators this morning to help raise awareness. “If I can help save one person’s life, it will mean a lot,” she said.

This week’s Mid-Missouri training program is the last of three held around the state. Participants have included employees from 22 school districts that make up the MU Partnership for Educational Renewal. Employees attending the training seminars are then required to train teachers, administrators and support staff in their own districts.

To reach the other 500 school districts in Missouri, Koller is working with the Missouri School Boards’ Association to possibly come up with district policies regarding suicide prevention.

“This is not a one-time thing,” he said. “This will be ongoing.”

Reach Janese Heavin at 573-815-1705 or e-mail jheavin@columbiatribune.com.
College Presidents' Bow to Bad Publicity: Pay Hikes Slow as Tuitions Continue to Soar

Tuesday, January 19, 2010 2:47 PM

By Patrice Wingert

Public-university presidents have been getting a lot of bad press recently: endowments are dwindling, state support is shrinking and tuitions, which have been rising faster than inflation for years, are jumping even more to close the gap. College and university presidents, who enjoy generous six-figure salaries and ample expenses and benefits, are being targeted for abuse by student protesters as a result.

And that student activism may have made a difference. College presidents got virtually no raises in 2008–09, and 15 of them actually reduced the overall size of their pay packages. That's quite a change compared to the last five years of steady increases that amounted to a median boost of 37 percent.

"Steadily rising pay packages of public-university chiefs riled parents, students, and politicians, especially as tuition increases also had been hefty from year to year," says Jeffrey Selingo, editor of The Chronicle of Higher Education, which annually ranks public universities by the size of their presidents' total compensation package. The pay packages often include a range of benefits (free housing, car, retirement pay, and deferred compensation, performance bonuses and club memberships) as well as salary. The median package for the 185 public and community colleges surveyed was $436,111.

At the top of the list is E. Gordon Gee, the president of Ohio State, whose pay package of $1.575 million is the only one to top $1 million. (By contrast, 23 private college presidents negotiated packages worth more than $1 million in 2007–08, the most recent year available.) Right behind Gee was University of Washington's Mark Emmert ($905,000); University of Delaware's Patrick Harker ($810,600) and University of Virginia's John Casteen III ($797,000).

But Gee was also at the top of the list of presidents giving back some of their pay package. Gee donated $321,000 of his pay toward the $1 million he has personally pledged to donate toward scholarships. Other pay cutters included: University of Louisville's James Ramsey, who turned down $315,000 in bonus pay.

University of Florida's J. Bernard Machen, who donated his $285,000 bonus to the Florida Opportunity Scholarship Fund. University of Kentucky's Lee T. Todd Jr., who declined a $168,000 performance bonus. University of Connecticut's Michael Hogan, who declined a scheduled 5 percent raise as well as a $100,000 bonus for the second year in a row.

Of course, it's easier to give back when you are already among the most highly paid. The presidents of the University of Missouri's system, University system of Maryland, University of Iowa, Iowa State, Arizona State and University of Northern Iowa, University of Colorado at Denver, Winona State University, University of Michigan system and Central Lakes College also volunteered to trim their compensation.

The Chronicle releases their annual survey of private college executives' compensation packages in November of each year. In 2007–08, the median private-college president got a 6.5 percent raise,
resulting in a median compensation package of $358,746. The presidents of the most prestigious group, the 419 major private research universities, got a median pay boost of 15.5 percent, bringing their median package to $627,750. When the next crop of numbers is collected in the fall, let's hope they have the political smarts to trim those back.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

University students find ways to help Haiti

By Dalene Rovenstine, Lindsay Ross
January 20, 2010 | 12:01 a.m. CST

COLUMBIA — Bundled in hats and gloves, MU freshmen Mary Angeleri and Stephanie Proffer called out to people passing by Speakers Circle to donate loose change Tuesday. They, like other church members at The Rock, were challenged last Saturday by their pastor, John Drage, to raise at least $10,000 for Haiti.

Proffer said church members hope to expand their donation efforts beyond collecting change. For example, they are planning to hold a concert Friday and to sell locally designed and printed T-shirts. To boost awareness, The Rock has created the Facebook group “Haiti Relief at Mizzou $10,000 Challenge.”

Samaritan’s Purse, an international relief agency, has offered to match as much as $10,000 to whatever The Rock raises by Saturday.

Proffer said she has seen other Facebook groups aimed at raising money for Haiti relief. “I love that everyone is rallying to help those who are less fortunate,” she said.

The Rock’s fundraising event is one example of how university students throughout Columbia are helping Haiti. International relief organizations, such as the American Red Cross, recommend donating money as the quickest way to get aid to the people of Haiti. Some students, however, have begun to generate ideas for other ways to contribute.

After last week’s 7.0-magnitude earthquake in Haiti, the death toll is estimated at 70,000 people, according to the Haitian prime minister. And those affected include students in Columbia.
Stephens College student Jasmine Johnson visited Haiti in the spring of 2009 for a mission trip and has continued to communicate via e-mail with people she met there. However, Johnson has not received replies from anyone there since the earthquake.

Wanting to help in her own way, Johnson plans to sponsor a shoe drive. The idea is for members of Overflow, a Campus Crusade for Christ chapter at Stephens, to help her collect shoes to send to Haiti. She hopes to involve MU students as well.

Columbia College has a relief program that will foster competition among the academic classes. Ben Graf, vice president of the Student Government Association, said the class officers will try to motivate their classmates to donate the most. Also, faculty and staff can donate and compete as a group against the classes. The Student Government Association will match donations up to $1,000.

“We decided to do monetary donations because the Red Cross can do more with the funds we give them than we could going out and buying things with the money we raise,” Graf said.

The officers have yet to choose a charity to give their donations to, but possibilities include the Red Cross and actor Ben Stiller’s charity, StillerStrong. They are planning to send the donations within two weeks to the chosen charity.

Students interviewed on all three campuses showed a range of responses in awareness and donation interests. While some had no desire or financial means to donate, others are hoping to help more as the opportunities unfold in Haiti.

“It’d be cool if I could physically go there,” Columbia College junior T.C. Ivory said. “Sometimes it’s about more than just throwing money at a problem.”