Uncharted territory” is ahead for some Missouri’s colleges, the state’s higher education commissioner warned this week, and it could get ugly.

Once the two-year tap of federal stimulus money runs dry, said Robert Stein, there will be a reckoning unless the state’s economy quickly recovers. To bridge the coming revenue gaps, he suggested:

• State campuses could close or be forced to go private.
• Some schools could become branches of larger ones.
• Nongraduating students who got state financial aid could be required to pay it back.
• Class sizes could soar.
• Shared academic programs and services between schools will be necessary.
• Athletic programs could get the ax.

Whole colleges shuttered? The plug on the swim team pulled? Colleges and universities complain every year about shrinking state support, but nothing so drastic has been suggested.

But this time the sky really is falling, according to Stein, “due to the extensiveness of the current economic downturn … and the sensitivity about using tuition to fill financial shortfalls.”

In his letter sent to campus chancellors and presidents, Stein said higher education has been spared major cuts for two years, in exchange for stable tuition:

“The facts are clear that, absent some unforeseen intervention or unprecedented economic turnaround, the state’s fiscal situation will mean reduced state appropriations to public higher education.”
Beginning in July 2011, the state no longer will have a $900 million stimulus safety net. The crash could bring cuts in the range of 15 to 20 percent.

Campus leaders in Missouri were braced for between 10 and 20 percent cuts last year. They instituted hiring freezes and cut administrative spending and some non-academic programs.

But before the bleeding became worse, “stimulus came along and kicked the can down the road,” said Paul Wagner, deputy commissioner of higher education. “Now we are seeing a cliff at the end of 2011 and we are really worried about how we are going to manage it.”

University of Missouri Chancellor Brady Deaton said the most severe suggestions probably would have no impact on MU. Nor are they likely to land on the University of Missouri-Kansas City, said Leo Morton, UMKC’s chancellor.

While neither MU or UMKC would lose their athletics, Deaton said, collaboration with other state institutions to reduce duplication already is being discussed. “The question is how we are going to do it.”

Deaton said the crisis was real and suggested institutions might be saved with higher taxes or tuition increases.

Absent that, or a turnaround in the economy restoring state revenue growth, he said, such wrenching change could be real possibilities for some campuses.

Stein wrote of crossing the state to collect suggestions:

“Almost everyone who suggested ideas agreed that if cuts of this magnitude were to pass it would be uncharted territory for higher education.”
Missouri higher education commissioner warns of more cuts

By The Associated Press
January 31, 2010 | 6:03 p.m. CST

KANSAS CITY — Missouri's higher education commissioner has warned that some of the state's colleges could be forced to make painful cuts once the two-year safety tap of federal stimulus money runs dry.

Robert Stein said in a letter to campus chancellors and presidents that unless the state's economy quickly recovers, there will be a reckoning, The Kansas City Star reported.

Stein said that to bridge the coming revenue gaps, some schools could become branches of larger ones, while others could close or be forced to go private. He also said class sizes could increase and athletic programs could be cut.

Another possibility is that schools would be required to share academic programs and services.

Stein said his predictions were so dire because of the "extensiveness of the current economic downturn and the sensitivity about using tuition to fill financial shortfalls."

He said higher education has been spared major cuts for two years, in exchange for stable tuition. But in his letter he stressed that "absent some unforeseen intervention or unprecedented economic turnaround, the state's fiscal situation will mean reduced state appropriations to public higher education."

The end of stimulus money means there could be cuts in the range of 15 to 20 percent.
Last year, campus leaders in Missouri braced for between 10 and 20 percent cuts, causing them to institute hiring freezes and cut administrative spending and some nonacademic programs.

But before the bleeding became worse, the "stimulus came along and kicked the can down the road," said Paul Wagner, deputy commissioner of higher education. "Now we are seeing a cliff at the end of 2011 and we are really worried about how we are going to manage it."

Stein wrote of crossing the state to collect suggestions and said that almost everyone who suggested ideas "agreed that if cuts of this magnitude were to pass it would be uncharted territory for higher education."
MU worker accused of sexual misconduct

Sunday, January 31, 2010

A University of Missouri employee was arrested yesterday for allegedly touching a fellow worker inappropriately.

Justin Q. Mull, 27, of 1605 Kitty Hawk Drive was arrested by campus police on suspicion of sexual misconduct after allegedly rubbing the back, breast and buttocks of a 20-year-old female co-worker, said University of Missouri Police Capt. Brian Weimer. Mull also allegedly forced the co-worker to rub his genitals through his pants.

The suspect is a catering server for University Club & University Catering, according to an MU directory.

Mull was released on a $500 bond. He could not be reached for comment.
January 30, 2010

MU president calls for more aid for higher ed

Forsee seeking revival of bond issue.

Alan Scher Zagier
The Associated Press

Columbia -- University of Missouri system President Gary Forsee publicly challenged state lawmakers and Gov. Jay Nixon to boost financial support of higher education, calling Friday for revival of a bond issue to finance campus building projects.

The former Sprint Nextel CEO cited near-record low interest rates and a favorable financial market in his annual State of the University speech but told university curators the "window will likely close this year."

Forsee's remarks at the University of Missouri-Kansas City represented some of his most forceful about the need for increased public financing of higher education since taking charge of the four-campus system nearly two years ago.

Missouri lawmakers last year considered a plan to spend several hundred million dollars on college construction and other state building needs. That bond proposal was approved by the House but stalled in the Senate. A similar proposal is back before the legislature.

"To the extent that people thought we were on the sidelines, I didn't want that to be the case," Forsee said after speech.

House Democrat Chris Kelly, of Columbia, called Forsee's leadership "a breath of fresh air."

"He's been very direct with the legislature and the people of Missouri about things that have needed to be said for a long time," said Kelly, sponsor of the $800 million bond proposal. If passed by lawmakers, the proposed constitutional amendment would appear on the November ballot.

Kelly said Forsee is "in the process of changing the university from a lamb into a lion, politically - or maybe I should say a Tiger."

University leaders have identified $3 billion worth of needed building repairs and construction, Forsee said, adding that the bond proposal would only "scratch the surface."

The issue has simmered in the Capitol for several years.
In 2007, lawmakers approved former Gov. Matt Blunt's plan to use $350 million from the Missouri Higher Education Loan Authority to support campus building projects. But Nixon reversed course in early 2009 after MOHELA was unable to make all of its scheduled payments toward the plan.

The projects included $31.2 million toward replacement of the 70-year-old Ellis Fischel Cancer Center in Columbia.

Forsee also unveiled a new three-year, $5 million Enterprise Investment Program for startup companies created to commercialize university research.
UM system president wants more state aid

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Friday, Jan. 29 2010

COLUMBIA, Mo. -- University of Missouri system President Gary Forsee wants state lawmakers and Gov. Jay Nixon to boost financial support of higher education.

In a speech to the Missouri Board of Curators Friday, Forsee called for revival of a bond issue to finance campus building projects.

The former Sprint Nextel CEO cited a favorable financial market in his annual State of the University speech but told university curators that the "window will likely close this year."

The Missouri Legislature approved a plan last year to spend $600 million over two years on college construction projects and other capital improvements. Nixon later vetoed that measure to help balance the budget.

The curators' meeting took place at the Kansas City campus.
Grading the Graders
Some are sexy, others are arrogant.

By the time she got to the slides showing neurological patterns in various brains, Ines Segert had the 30-plus students in her behavioral science class hooked.

Likely the photo of Bella and Edward — popular characters from the movie “Twilight” — piqued the young adults’ interest. Just seeing an image from the movie generated some laughs and murmurs of recognition from the students, who then took turns listing the symptoms of the chemical phenomenon known as love.

“She didn’t care that he was a vampire,” one student offered, referring to Bella’s affection for her fanged beau.

“Right. Willing to overlook flaws,” Segert summarized.

Carefully selecting and combining cultural references with the more difficult scientific information is part of Segert’s style when she teaches psychology courses at the University of Missouri.

And judging from online reviews, it’s popular.

Segert, according to students who write anonymous comments on the Web site known as Rate My Professor, is “fabulous,” and her “teaching skills are awesome.” Plus, she’s “hot” to boot, according to students who attached a red pepper next to her name to symbolize attractiveness. Rate My Professor is a private Web site where students, or apparently anyone else, can grade professors anonymously.

Not everyone has given Segert a good rating, though. One student called her “scatter brained” and chided her for using a projector instead of PowerPoint presentations.

Segert — one of few professors who acknowledge checking out her Rate My Professor profile — doesn’t mind the feedback.

“I think it’s really interesting to see the extremes,” she said. “When someone posts something complimentary, it is very meaningful because they went out of their way to do that.” And the negative comments “sometimes could signal something is wrong.”
Most MU professors don’t take RateMyProfessor.com seriously, said Victoria Johnson, associate professor of sociology. The online database is known for luring those who either love or hate a professor, and many times the affection is based on what kind of grade a student took home, she said.

Still, Johnson recognizes that online evaluations are having an impact on the culture of universities. And that’s not necessarily a good thing, she said.

“I’m concerned this market model is partly responsible for the dumbing down of our country,” Johnson said. “When feedback is used as a measure of customer satisfaction, that’s not the same as holding students accountable and responsible.”

“Smokin’ Hot,” “Deep Sexy Voice”

It’s nothing new for students to evaluate their professors. For years, students have been asked to fill out standardized evaluations at the end of every semester.

That feedback is used, in part, when promoting or granting tenure to faculty members, but it also helps professors know what their students are thinking, said Ken Dean, associate provost at MU.

“They’re really designed to help faculty members understand what’s effective and not effective,” he said.

Professors take them seriously.

“I rely on student feedback that I get at the end of each semester,” said James Spain, vice provost for undergraduate students and an associate professor of dairy nutrition.

Spain said he does not look at Rate My Professor — where one student dubbed him the best professor in history — but “I read each one of the evaluation sheets where students make handwritten notes.”

That input sometimes leads to changes in a class. Segert said she has implemented changes in her classrooms over the years based on what students tell her.

“Sometimes students do have good suggestions for something in class,” she said. “I don’t modify class to make it more fun for them, but I do want to make sure they are learning and that I’m doing a good job of teaching so they will learn.”

Full professor evaluations are accessed only by professors and the colleagues who evaluate them.

Even before the Internet or evaluations, though, students have always had a grapevine to let them know which professors are easy or entertaining. It’s not unusual for a student to tell his fraternity brother which professor to avoid or for an older student to encourage a younger peer to take a specific professor’s class. In fact, a handful of students randomly polled on the MU campus earlier this month indicated word-of-mouth is still a preferred method.

But online Web sites have changed that network of information. Online, students are veiled in anonymity, allowing them to voice opinions they might not otherwise say aloud. On Rate My Professor, students have felt free to tell the world that reputable MU professors are “dull” or “arrogant” or more vulgar labels marked with strings of asterisks.

Comments get personal, too. One female professor at MU is criticized for having “savagely” curly hair and wearing too many rings. Another male professor is praised for being “smokin’ hot” with a “deep sexy voice.”

Professors might take little stock in those reviews, but Web sites where students can critique professors have been a game changer.
State Mandate

In 2007, the legislature approved Senate Bill 389 — an omnibus higher-education bill that required public colleges and universities to make course evaluations accessible to students on internal Web sites. MU has been doing so since the spring of 2009. The evaluations, along with professor credentials, are found in MyZou, the password-protected site where students can manage their schedules, tuition and other personal information.

The evaluations are only for classes that already happened, so students enrolling this semester would have had to look up that information from past semesters. And evaluations are only attached to exact classes that the professor is teaching again. In other words, a student in Segert’s personal identity class this semester would not have access to a course evaluation because she taught a different course last semester.

The state-mandated course evaluation is not used for tenure or promotion, Dean said, and is separate from traditional written student evaluations. The course evaluation lets students gauge whether a professor presented information clearly, was interested in student learning and was effective as an educator. For each of the three statements, students can strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree or have no opinion.

The state adopted that evaluation mandate, in part, to counter the extreme opinions found on external professor-ranking Web sites, according to Tribune archives.

But having the state require the evaluations might be giving them undue credibility, Johnson said, noting there’s little evidence that shows evaluations accurately measure student learning.

One study, which researchers at Ohio State University released in 2007, found no correlation between professor evaluations and the learning that actually takes place in the classroom. Authors said one possible reason is because students don’t realize how much they’ve actually learned.

Johnson fears, then, that the state-mandated evaluations give students a false sense of security about the educational value of a class.

“That it’s somehow telling a student what’s going to be a good class in terms of educational outcomes is a myth,” she said. “It’s a misrepresentation to students and parents.”

For some professors, though, the anonymous internal course evaluations do balance out negative online reviews.

Jay Dow, an associate professor of political science, for instance, gets mediocre marks on the Rate My Professor site. Some students criticize him for being “arrogant,” and others acknowledge Dow is knowledgeable in his field.

Dow has generated 68 comments on that site — a lot compared to his peers but not many in the scheme of his 15-year teaching career at MU. This year, he’s had just four comments on the site reviewing his performance in a government class.

The state-mandated course evaluation tells a different picture. Dow, according to the majority of the 280 students who took one of his classes last semester, presents information clearly, is interested in student learning and is an effective teacher.

“I do think” the internal course evaluations “are a good measure and much more accurate,” Dow said. “The problem with Rate My Professor is the people who go on that site are self-selective. They’re either very upset or very happy. A standard teaching evaluation is done in class with all students in attendance, so you’re getting 200 opinions versus three or four.”
Grade Distributions

Proponents of internal course evaluations argued they would help students make more informed decisions. Zora AuBuchon, a legislative liaison for the Missouri Department of Higher Education, at the time praised the evaluations for treating students as consumers.

MU faculty members, however, argue that students are not customers. Treating them as such opens the door to grade inflation and coddling, Johnson said.

“We're not camp counselors,” she said.

Johnson said she doesn’t mind helping students but that the focus should be on maintaining industry standards.

Dow believes Missouri taxpayers, instead, make up the university’s customer base. MU’s service in return is to provide well-educated people prepared to work in their respective fields.

“My job as a faculty member is to ensure their tax dollars are well spent,” he said. “We’re not a private school. People in the state of Missouri are paying to educate students here, so it’s important we, as faculty, protect their interests.”

Asked about evaluations, MU students admitted to checking out a professor-ranking Web site on occasion, but most said the feedback did not influence their course decisions.

“I just go with whatever class I need,” said freshman Daniel Kinder.

The one professor freshman Maddie Effertz checked into online got good reviews, although it’s too early in the semester for her to judge whether she agrees.

Will Shanhouse, a junior majoring in political science, doesn’t look at professor evaluations, but he did shuffle his schedule based on a professor’s grade distribution.

The MU Office of the Registrar’s Web site provides grade distribution information for every professor on campus. Anyone can access the site and scroll down to a professor’s name to find out whether he or she doles out A’s.

There are mixed feelings about whether students should know that information, but that online feature, too, came about because of a professor-rating site.

Eight years ago, the Missouri Students Association was poised to add MU information to ProfEval.com, another ranking site that does not appear to be as frequently used as Rate My Professor.

MSA at the time filed a Sunshine Law request with the registrar’s office for grade information and indicated it would do so every semester.

The office complied, but MU administrators decided the university would provide that same information on its own site, according to Tribune archives.

Shanhouse thinks that database saved him from a tough professor. He was about to take an economics course when he found out the professor doesn’t give out many A’s. Shanhouse switched to one who seemed more generous with grades.

Sure, he might have been more challenged under the tougher professor, but Shanhouse wants to get into law school. “It would be hard to tell the law school: ‘Sorry I got a crappy grade, but I learned more,’” he said. “They’re interested in grade-point average.”
That sentiment is familiar to Dow. He said he’s often trying to convince undergraduates that knowledge is more powerful than grades.

“There are two things adults never ask each other: what their grades were or what they majored in,” he said. “Grades and majors are so important to college students, but only in that stage of life is it true. You want to learn things in college. That’s your chance in life to read great books, learn to speak a foreign language, learn about art and history.”

Segert — who, despite her online critique, refuses to replace classroom discussion with PowerPoint presentations — is optimistic today’s youths still crave knowledge and recognize good old-fashioned, challenging teaching when they see it.

“A lot of the people who get really good evaluations are tough teachers,” she said. “The classes are not easy. But students go in and they’re engaged. The best way to engage them is to have really interesting material, and, yes, present it in an engaging way, but make them engaged cognitively, not just visually.”

Sure, the image of lovebirds Bella and Edward helped students understand the course material, but that’s what seems to work.

After all, Segert “wants to make the class as relevant as possible,” a student who took her psychology class last semester wrote on RateMyProfessor.com. And that’s why Segert is “absolutely great.”

Reach Janese Heavin at 573-815-1705 or e-mail jheavin@columbiatribune.com.

Students have a variety of ways to gauge a professor at the University of Missouri before they enroll in a course, but not all evaluations are equal. Here is a comparison of ratings from the external Rate My Professor Web site, MU’s internal course evaluation and MU’s online grade distribution. The professor’s name has been redacted. Some ratings span more than one year.

**MIZZOU COURSE EVALUATION**

Number of students rating: 11; The course content, including the lectures, syllabus, grading standards and student responsibilities, was presented clearly.

- Strongly agree: 91 percent
- Agree: 9 percent
- Disagree: 0 percent
- Strongly disagree: 0 percent

The instructor was interested in student learning.

- Strongly agree: 82 percent
- Agree: 18 percent
- Disagree: 0 percent
- Strongly disagree: 0 percent

Considering both the possibilities and limitations of the subject matter and the course (including class size and facilities), the instructor taught effectively. Strongly agree: 91 percent

- Agree: 0 percent
- Disagree: 9 percent
- Strongly disagree: 0 percent

**REGISTRAR’S OFFICE GRADE DISTRIBUTION, FALL 2009**

Number of students receiving: A-range: 17

- B-range: 9
- C-range: 0
- D-range: 0
- F-range: 0

Average grade: 3.654
Forsee a ‘forceful’ voice for UM

Kelly says president is hitting mark in Capitol.

By Janese Heavin; Saturday, January 30, 2010

University of Missouri President Gary Forsee talks about the four-campus system as being a solution to boosting Missouri’s lackluster economy.

He used the first half of his second State of the University address yesterday to tout specific examples of where the university is excelling in that area, from hosting an energy summit at MU that attracted more than 1,600 attendees to partnerships with Fort Leonard Wood and Cerner Corp. aimed to bring new resources to the state and university.

Forsee is a cheerleader for the university system, unafraid to challenge those who think differently. And his leadership style is getting noticed in the state Capitol, said state Rep. Chris Kelly, D-Columbia.

“Generally speaking, he’s much more willing to be forceful about the university, which I think is really important,” Kelly said. “He doesn’t just say the university has value — he behaves like the university has value. He’s willing to get in there and squawk and not so willing to take ‘no’ for an answer.”

Former UM System President Elson Floyd was criticized by previous Columbia lawmakers for not being aggressive enough or being afraid to take hard stands on issues.

Forsee, on the other hand, “is in there fighting,” Kelly said.

The former Sprint CEO challenges others, too. When asked by a Kansas City Star employee yesterday whether allocating $5 million to commercialization of research would send the wrong message to lawmakers, he chided her for indicating education is the only mission of the university.

The university has four core missions: Teaching, research, service and economic development. The latter has been a focus of Forsee’s for the past two years.

“Our mission is clear, and it is historic and unique,” he said in his public address. “Sometimes the rareness of the mission isn’t as uniform in all corners.”

Forsee’s new initiative sets aside $5 million to give startup companies seed money in exchange for partnering with the university.

Although that $5 million won’t be used for teaching and learning — often considered the university’s main responsibility — the legislature will “love it,” Kelly said.
"That's what a lot of my colleagues think the core mission of the university is: to help drive the economy of Missouri," he said. "So many people don't get that professors have to be doing research and sometimes don't even know what the final results are going to be."

Something like the discovery of an isotope can lead to cancer detection and cures, he said.

"That's what basic research is," Kelly said. "Forsee gets that and articulates it."

Reach Janese Heavin at 573-815-1705 or e-mail jheavin@columbiatribune.com.

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Tribune Column

Forsee's leadership key in tough times

By Bob Roper | Sunday, January 31, 2010

Jim Moody was the Missouri budget director for several years, and when he speaks about state budgets, people listen. What he has been saying lately is, to put it mildly, scary. His basic message is unless things change substantially — and he sees no way they can — when the federal stimulus monies run out at the end of June 2011, Missouri's finances will sustain a $1 billion shortfall. For the University of Missouri, in Columbia and elsewhere, that translates into a huge problem.

The university desperately needs to do at least two capital projects. One is a renovation and addition to Lafferre Hall, which is estimated to cost $50 million, at the College of Engineering. Likewise, Ellis Fischel Cancer Center needs roughly $31 million from the state for that important project. And of course there is a great deal of overdue maintenance and repair work that goes wanting.

But most of all, what the university needs is to not be cut substantially in its roughly $455 million-a-year state funding, one-half of which is spent at the Columbia campus. Frankly, the likelihood of avoiding substantial cuts is roughly on a par with me climbing Mount Everest.

What should the UM Board of Curators and administration do with respect to the foregoing problem? They should do what they are now doing: mainly following the good leadership suggestions of President Gary Forsee. Forsee's actions show a commitment to being ingenious and adaptable in raising money, cutting costs and ensuring the university's core mission is protected.

Here are some examples of this mindset at work:

- Explore and where possible create private partnerships that reduce costs and, in some cases, enhance the university's opportunity to develop additional revenues. The recent MU Health/Cerner Corp. relationship is a good example and probably the first of several we will see.

- Push as hard as possible the development of spinoff income from technology-based opportunities. This will take the form of patent and royalty income generated by research discoveries that lend themselves to commercial applications. The structure is in place — albeit a bit unwieldy at times — and the goal is to move those revenues from $11 million a year to $50 million per year in the next four years.

- Be open to innovative ideas to cut costs, such as increasing the number of schools that offer three-year undergraduate degrees. The university is looking at this delivery system. Similar ideas include increasing Internet-based classes, evening classes and off-site classes.

- Develop and put in place a strong accountability system. This is well on the way and is titled the UM Accountability Measures System (AMS). The point is to rationally determine what programs and jobs are important and thereafter develop some accountability with respect to how well the university is doing in meeting sensible targets. This exercise frankly should be done at all times, but it becomes particularly important in lean times. This is under way.
• Avoid costly outlays wherever possible. Recently, Forsee caught some serious heat for his letter opposing the "cap and trade" bill in the U.S. Senate, but a sober analysis of its costly effects on MU certainly made sense.

• Explore working with local communities to develop innovative partnerships that would help with important capital projects. This concept is in the exploration stage; hopefully, it will bear fruit in the near future.

All of the foregoing reminds me of a phenomenon that occurred in the local and national business communities several years ago. It was called "re-engineering," and the gist of it was companies that wanted to survive long-term would get their costs down by using technology and other means wherever possible. It also involved the review of the company’s core mission and the willingness to make hard decisions about departments and jobs necessary to fulfill it. Finally, it involves the willingness to take sensible risks in the pursuit of desirable change. It is abundantly clear Forsee is willing to do all of this — a very good thing. Not easy, not fun, but it is something the university leadership needs to do, and I wish them well as they pursue it.

Not long ago, a Tribune article reviewed Forsee’s service on the board of directors of Ingersoll Rand Corp. and Great Plains Energy, as well as the recent agreement with Cerner Corp. The article was titled "Business ties of MU chief a mixed bag," though what made it a mixed bag was never stated other than the potential for a conflict of interest in a specific deal. I think it is an unmixed blessing. In times like these, it is clearly a good thing the president of the university has a lot of business contacts that will help the university with its ongoing need to preserve and enhance its core mission. Forsee can deal with conflict of interest on a per issue basis, just like everyone else. It’s no big deal.

Tribune columnist Bob Roper is a former local banking and investment executive with a longstanding interest in public issues.
Gary Forsee calls for more state support on higher education

By ALAN SCHER ZAGIER/The Associated Press
January 31, 2010 | 12:01 a.m. CST

COLUMBIA — University of Missouri system President Gary Forsee publicly challenged state lawmakers and Gov. Jay Nixon to boost financial support of higher education, calling Friday for revival of a bond issue to finance campus building projects.

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"He's been very direct with the Legislature and the people of Missouri about things that have needed to be said for a long time," said Kelly, sponsor of the $800 million bond proposal. If passed by lawmakers, the proposed constitutional amendment would appear on the November ballot.
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In 2007, lawmakers approved former Gov. Matt Blunt's plan to use $350 million from the Missouri Higher Education Loan Authority to support campus building projects. But Nixon reversed course in early 2009 after MOHELA was unable to make all of its scheduled payments toward the plan.

The projects included $31.2 million toward replacement of the 70-year-old Ellis Fischel Cancer Center in Columbia.

Forsee also unveiled a new three-year, $5 million Enterprise Investment Program for startup companies created to commercialize university research.
Hall renovations to add class space

Friday, January 29, 2010

KANSAS CITY — The University of Missouri Board of Curators today approved designs for Tate and Switzler hall renovations on the MU campus.

Both historic brick-and-stone structures will be renovated to become modern facilities for the College of Arts and Sciences, according to the proposal.

Renovations at Tate, expected to cost about $8 million, will add 90 classroom seats and 23 additional faculty offices. Switzler Hall renovations will add 180 classroom seats and seven faculty offices and is expected to cost about $7 million.

Both projects are expected to be complete in June 2011.

The bulk of the funding is coming from $35 million in revenue bonds curators approved last summer. Bonds will be repaid from annual maintenance budgets, said Nikki Krawitz, vice president of finance and administration.

This article was published on page A2 of the Friday, January 29, 2010 edition of The Columbia Daily Tribune. Click here to Subscribe.
Higher housing costs set for MU

Flat tuition depends on state lawmakers.

By Janese Heavin; Friday, January 29, 2010

KANSAS CITY — University of Missouri students will pay more for room and board on campus in the fall, but the increases aren’t aimed to plug operating budget shortfalls. UM administrators stressed yesterday.

Campus housing is an auxiliary service, which means the department supports its own maintenance and other expenses. Campuses know they cannot take from the housing budget to pay for general operation; otherwise they would end up with poor-quality residential halls, Nikki Krawitz, vice president of finance and administration, told the Board of Curators yesterday.

Curators this morning approved housing increases across the four-campus system. Increases vary by the type of room and the condition of the residence hall. Students opting for a semi-suite single room at MU, for instance, will pay $7,345 next year, compared with a student who will pay $5,085 for a traditional double room. The predominant room and board plan — which consists of a traditional double room and 14 meals per week — will cost $7,925 next school year, a 3.9 percent increase.

Housing cost changes aren’t affected by an agreement universities made with Gov. Jay Nixon to keep tuition flat for the next school year. Still, Krawitz said, administrators kept that arrangement in mind.

"We worked very closely with campuses to try to keep these” housing increases “held down as much as we could,” she said. “We are cognizant of the economic pressures on families and students and only bring to you increases that are absolutely necessary."

Room and board fees are used to repay bonds for residential hall construction. The increases also reflect inflation and minimum wage increases for support staff.

Nixon announced before the legislative session that he would recommend no more than a 5 percent cut to higher education if public colleges agreed to freeze tuition. The recommendation still has to be approved by legislators.

The tuition freeze would apply only to in-state, undergraduate tuition, meaning the university could raise rates for graduate and out-of-state students in the fall.

Course fees attached to specific programs aren’t included in that freeze agreement because they are not applied to all students, Krawitz said. She doesn’t expect administrators to recommend significant course fee hikes, though. “Any large increase would be outside the spirit of the agreement and difficult to do in this economic environment,” she said.

Curators are waiting until the April meeting to vote on tuition rates for the coming year, in part because administrators want to make sure state lawmakers agree to the budget arrangement.
"If the General Assembly or governor couldn't deliver on that 5 percent, then the ball is back in our court," UM System President Gary Forsee said.

A state Senate bill approved three years ago requires public colleges to get permission from the state’s Department of Higher Education and its coordinating board if they want to raise tuition higher than the consumer price index. That means UM could increase undergraduate tuition by 2.8 percent without state approval if the agreement with Nixon does not come to fruition. Graduate tuition is not bound by that law.

Krawitz said administrators are still discussing graduate and out-of-state tuition rates for the coming year.

Reach Janese Heavin at 573-815-1705 or e-mail jheavin@columbiatribune.com.

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Curators approve UM system student housing fee increase

By Bryan Richardson, Katy Borgen, Nicole Lebsack
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COLUMBIA -- 

Students throughout the University of Missouri System living on campus will pay more for housing and meal plans starting this summer, The UM System Board of Curators unanimously approved the plan Friday morning.

The fee increases for room and board on each campus will vary. Based on the most popular plans at each campus, fees will increase:

- 3.9 percent at MU
- 3 percent at University of Missouri-Kansas City
- 4.2 percent at the Missouri University of Science and Technology
- 6.1 percent at University of Missouri-St. Louis

The most popular plan at MU, a renovated double room and 14 meals per week, will increase by $300, raising the cost to $7,925 for two semesters.

"We always have concerns about increasing housing and dining fees, but usually people understand that we are subject to the same increases that they are at home if we are going to provide these services," said Nikki Krawitz, system vice president of finance and administration.

The primary reasons behind raising housing rates at MU are the anticipated increase in utility rates and ongoing renovations of residence halls.

The renovations are a part of the Residential Life Master Plan, which was approved in 2001. The projected cost of the project, which includes several new residence halls and
upgrades to many existing halls, is $370 million. The plan is expected to be completed by fall 2017.

The Department of Residential Life receives no state or university funding. About 92 percent of its budget comes from the housing fees paid by students. In addition to construction costs, the department's expenses include maintenance and worker wages and benefits.

"All of our bills have to be paid for by the money we generate ourselves," Residential Life Director Frankie Minor said.

The department presented the proposed budget to the Residence Halls Association, a group that represents students living in residence halls, and Minor said the group didn't raise any concerns. Some university students, however, aren't so sure this is the right thing to do.

John McClain, a junior who transferred from Lincoln University, said there are other ways to raise the money. He said the Board of Curators is taking a shortcut by approving this plan.

"They can get it done without charging people extra," McClain said. "They're not considering other people's situation."

If he had to live on campus, McClain said, he wouldn't be able to afford it. Other students also find it cheaper to stay off-campus.

Jasin Stewart, a junior, decided to move off campus this school year after comparing the price of Tiger Diggs, MU-run student housing at Campus View Apartments, to the cost of living at Campus View without a university housing contract.

"When I compared the price of what it would cost to live in Campus View without Tiger Diggs, it was significantly cheaper," Stewart said.

This school year, Tiger Diggs cost $5,740 — plus the price of a campus meal plan, which is required — to lease through the academic year. Campus View charges $3,420 for the same type of room with a 12-month lease. The cost of Tiger Diggs is charged to the student's university account.
Tiffany Morrow, a freshman who lives at Tiger Diggs, said she understood raising housing fees because of rising utility rates. But, she said, students shouldn't have to pay more because of hall closings and reconstructions.

"It's not the students' fault, so why should they be affected by it?" Morrow said.

Freshman are required to live on campus, but Residential Life is willing to waive that requirement for those who request to live elsewhere, Minor said.

In the last two years, Minor added, there has been a 20 percent increase in the number of returning students who want to live on campus.

"They like the services they get and the quality of their experience," Krawitz said.

Chris Willett, a sophomore, said the hike in housing fees is understandable.

"The cost of living is going up because of expansion, growth and development," Willett said. "The only way to support growth and development is with money."

Minor said the fee increase is the lowest the department could allow to meet projected costs.

"Our staff is trying to get by with limited or static resources," Minor said. "But one thing we don't lose track of is that we are here for the students, and it is them we are ultimately trying to serve."

Also during the curators meeting, UM System President Gary Forsee called for state lawmakers to revive a plan to use $350 million from the Missouri Higher Education Loan Authority to finance campus building projects.

Forsee also created an Enterprise Investment Program, which has set aside $5 million to create startup companies to commercialize university research.

*The Associated Press contributed to this report.*
Wanted: Creative ideas for online courses

By Janese Heavin; Friday, January 29, 2010

KANSAS CITY — University of Missouri administrators plan to ask faculty members across the four-campus system to devise new electronic ways to deliver course content.

Steve Graham, vice president for academic affairs, told the UM Board of Curators yesterday that he will request proposals in the coming weeks. They could include new ways to offer existing classes or creative new hybrid courses, he said.

The system is setting aside a pool of funding to award to accepted plans, but Graham said the exact amount will depend on the proposals submitted.

The UM System is somewhat playing catch-up to an online college market that has grown rapidly during the past decade. The number of students opting for online coursework grew from about 2 million in 2003 to nearly 12 million last year, Graham said. Researchers, he said, are predicting millions more will opt for computer courses over traditional classrooms in the next five years.

Originally, Graham and UM President Gary Forsee were looking to the University of Illinois' model, which essentially created a separate campus for online learners.

After some research, “we don’t think that fits as well for us,” Forsee said. “At the same time, we want collaboration across schools.”

Graham said he envisions a central portal that an online UM community could access, but the four campuses would be responsible for meeting the unique needs of their own online learners.

While the system is soliciting input from faculty members, student associations at each campus will be surveying students to see what they want in online options, said Laura Confer, the board’s student representative, who attends Missouri University of Science and Technology.

She said the survey originated on the Rolla campus but was expanded to all campuses. Confer said she expects the student input to be provided to interested faculty.

Curators seemed supportive of the shift to a more electronic learning environment.

“If we don’t do this, we’re going to be left behind,” Curator Warren Erdman of Kansas City said. “Look at the way kids communicate today. … We better do this, and we better be good at it.”

Reach Janese Heavin at 573-815-1705 or e-mail jheavin@columbiatribune.com.

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Students in private colleges get more Access Missouri aid

Program exceeds the state's obligation to independent schools.

Anna Osterlind  ** Anna Osterlind is assistant legislative director of the Associated Students of the University of Missouri.

Drury University President Todd Parnell's recent op-ed "Protecting Access Missouri is a must" lacks many key facts in the current debate surrounding the Access Missouri program. For one, he fails to explain how Access awards are currently distributed to Missouri's neediest students.

Under the program, the state may grant college students attending private institutions (such as Drury University) up to twice the aid as their public school counterparts.

So when Mr. Parnell says that Senate Bill 784 will "drastically reduce Access Missouri financial aid awards for Missouri students who attend independent colleges and universities," he neglects to mention that the intent of the bill is to equalize the maximum award amount for all students -- regardless of the institution they choose to attend.

It is not so easy to defend the current system by which students at schools such as Mr. Parnell's may receive $4,600 per year while equally needy students at public schools are only eligible for $2,150.

Although some argue that private schools are more expensive, to say that the label "private" is itself justification for this gap ignores the huge disparity of cost within each set of institutions.

One problem with Access is that it uses the hefty tuition numbers of schools such as Washington University in St. Louis to provide disproportionately large scholarships to those students choosing to attend schools that aren't necessarily as expensive. Whereas Wash U. had an annual tuition of well over $35,000, Park University just outside of Kansas City rings up at only $7,300.

Despite the difference in price tags, both schools are private, and therefore students at each are eligible to receive the higher award amount through the Access Missouri program.

Furthermore, it's irresponsible for Mr. Parnell to say as he does that "We can't rebuild Missouri's economy by forcing tens of thousands of needy students to drop out of college." We certainly can't, but suggesting that this outcome is plausible under SB784 is entirely misleading. Since the proposed changes would not take effect until the 2014-2015 academic year, current students who rely on their existing awards to stay in school will maintain them -- in full.
Independent colleges and universities certainly do fulfill a crucial role to the state, but motivated students with great financial need exist in both sectors.

Arguing that only private school students merit the larger award in assistance suggests otherwise. Access Missouri in its current form greatly exceeds the state’s obligation to independent schools.

Missouri currently ranks fourth in the nation in terms of per capita state funding to private higher education institutions. In terms of public schools, we’re 45th. Simply put, it’s poor public policy to maintain a system that allows us to fall so far behind.
Mizzou to sow seed money for new firms

By MARÁ ROSE WILLIAMS

The University of Missouri system is setting aside $5 million to help new businesses start up in the state.

**MU President Gary Forsee this morning in his second State of the University address announced the Enterprise Investment Program to help launch start-up companies and move discoveries out of campus labs and into the marketplace.**

While $5 million over three years is not a lot of money, Forsee acknowledged, it makes clear the commitment to "create more high-quality jobs, build the state’s tax revenues and cultivate new revenue streams for the university."

Forsee spoke this morning to the Board of Curators during its meeting at the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

Start-ups applying for the fund's seed money won't have to come directly from one of the university campuses, but would need to meet requirements, such as using MU technology, and locating in the state.

The first award is expected this fall.

"The economic development commitment of the university has come light years in the last few years," said Curator Warren Erdman of Kansas City.

In his address, Forsee also highlighted some of the system's accomplishments in 2009: record enrollments on the four campuses, winning $35 million in new federal stimulus money for research, and launching the Tiger Institute for Health Innovation, a partnership between the Cerner Corporation and the university.

The system also was challenged by state budget cuts which forced campuses to halt hiring, eliminate jobs and cut some programs. The lack of money for capital improvements has left campuses with millions of dollars in deferred maintenance, he said.

He called on lawmakers to take advantage of low interest rates and pass a bond issue for construction and improvements on campuses.
A new bond issue, Forsee added, would also create construction jobs and provide a boost for the state’s economy.
University of Missouri System to launch $5M business fund

The University of Missouri System plans to establish a new three-year, $5 million fund for start-up companies, President Gary Forsee announced Friday in his State of the University address.

The Enterprise Investment Program “is designed to help fund start-up companies in Missouri that can move the discoveries of our faculty from the laboratory to the marketplace,” Forsee said.

He said he anticipates the new fund will leverage the university’s expertise in life sciences, nanoscience, information technology, engineering, medicine/medical devices and energy.

An outside advisory panel representing, for example, technology, science and business sectors will be formed to review funding applications and recommend funding awards, Forsee said. This panel’s review process, which will include evaluation of business plans and proposed use of the funds, is slated to begin this summer. The university hopes to make its first awards this fall.

Eligible start-up companies — including those that operate out of university incubators across the state — must obtain an investment, whether raised or invested directly by the founder(s), at a level that shows a commitment to the company’s success, Forsee said. Additional consideration will be given to start-ups with funding available from Small Business Investigative Grants (SBIR) and/or Small Technology Transfer Grants (STTR), and/or matching funds from other sources.
Though not all of the requirements have been finalized, firms wishing to apply for these funds must meet a series of minimum standards, including:

- They must have licensed a University of Missouri technology;
- They must be located and licensed to do business in Missouri, and maintain employees and assets in Missouri;
- They must be committed to commercializing University of Missouri-owned intellectual property;
- They must agree to grant the university an equity interest in the venture with a fair market value equivalent to the amount of the university's financial investment;
- They must agree to provide the university with annual financial statements, quarterly progress reports and other appropriate information reasonably requested by the university; and
- They must accept funding installments based on achievement of agreed-upon milestones.

Missouri's economic development chief, David Kerr, applauded the creation of the fund.

The university system supports 10 research parks, incubators and business accelerators across the state. Last year the university received more than $308 million in externally sponsored research funding. Faculty research currently generates more than $10 million a year in licensing income — with plans under way to increase licensing revenue to $50 million by 2014.