Missouri and Kansas in teacher pay-for-performance push

By JOE ROBERTSON

MU MENTION ON PAGE 2

Meet Jenna Delay, high school English teacher.

Just got a stellar evaluation.

While her principal watched recently, she had Olathe North High School sophomores of wide-ranging demeanors and beliefs openly sharing their feelings as they prepared to read the Greek tragedy "Antigone."

She is studying instructional strategies in her free time. Team-leading. Working extra hours. Graded outstanding by almost every measure.

And is paid basically the same wage as any other nine-year teacher.

With Missouri and Kansas joined in a federally fueled rush to find ways to pay teachers by their performances, Olathe North Principal Connie Heinen would have policymakers think of Delay and teachers such as her.

"I think it should happen," Heinen said. "There are a lot of Jennas who work long hours and work on a salary schedule like everyone else."

For years, the idea of paying teachers more like professionals has hung up not on the concept, but on issues of fairness, funding and the fear of further movement away from hard-to-teach students.

Test score data could not be dissected enough to isolate the impact of an individual teacher. Subjective performance evaluations tilted too much on the whims of a principal.

Now the Obama administration and Education Secretary Arne Duncan want states to get over the hang-ups and make it happen.
The government is dangling $4 billion in competitive grants through the Race to the Top stimulus fund, looking for a range of ideas to improve schools.

Missouri and Kansas have pledged to develop performance evaluation systems as part of their bids.

“It may never be perfect,” said consultant David Lineberry, who has worked with the Kansas City School District to deepen its teacher evaluations, “accounting for poverty, special education, students who speak a different language than their teacher …

“The implications of where it might take us are exciting. But we have to be deliberate and thoughtful.”

The idea is not radical, said University of Missouri economics professor Michael Podgursky. Other professions pull it off, and that makes education’s delays all the more frustrating to pay-for-performance advocates.

“If you see a school, class or teacher persistently producing higher growth, shouldn’t they be paid more?” he said. “Wouldn’t you want to retain those people?”

Studies of the impact of pay-for-performance programs show promise, he said, but the amount of data is too small.

Historically it has been difficult to isolate the effect of a teacher on a student’s performance apart from the influence of a student’s home and surroundings, and the influence of other teachers and programs.

Where school systems have installed versions of pay for performance, it has likewise been hard to isolate its effects on teacher retention and student performance.

Virtually all Missouri and Kansas public school districts pay teachers according to a stepladder with uniform annual increases. Teachers can move into a higher pay ladder by continuing postgraduate education.

Meanwhile, districts have been building better teacher and principal evaluation forms. States are developing data systems to track individual student performance across school and district boundaries.

And administrations are working with teacher unions.

“These are all things we need to be working on anyway,” whether or not the improvements can be tied to performance pay, said Wade Anderson of the Kansas National Education Association.

Districts such as Olathe have established an intense system of classroom observation to grade teachers on a range of performance standards. Teachers work with principals to set individual goals, then measure progress.
The Kansas City district has developed a 60-page evaluation form that depends heavily on principal observation, piloting a statewide project to build universal teaching standards.

It has been a difficult first year, said Andrea Flinders of the Kansas City Federation of Teachers, but the union is collaborating on the new process. Teachers want a performance review based on real information and not subject to a personality conflict with a principal, she said.

“We are not against evaluation and accountability,” she said. “We want a tool to help identify any problems and improve. But with some, (the evaluation) has been used more as an I’m-gonna-get-ya sort of thing.”

Districts are also putting better student test data to work to make personnel decisions.

Missouri and Kansas have created a student identification number system to track the academic growth of individual students, enhancing the old practice of comparing the performance of this year’s third-graders to last year’s.

Schools are using the information to identify lead teachers, strengthen training and lean on those teachers whose students are lagging, said Center School District Superintendent Bob Bartman.

“You’d have to be almost insensitive to know that students going through a particular class are not performing well and not do anything about it,” he said.

But the ability to reliably link test scores to teacher pay is not there yet, he said.

The technology and training are expensive. If schools went to pay for performance, he said, he would rather reward teachers by teams or by building, rather than struggle for fair rewards for a range of teachers, including those in specialties such as art, music and special education.

Both states have acknowledged that reward systems may need incentives to encourage teachers to take on historically low-performing schools and classrooms.

Otto Fajen with the Missouri National Education Association wonders if the resources demanded to develop a viable pay-for-performance system are missing the target for improving education.

“It’s being pushed by an ideology where greed is the primary motivator,” he said. “You’re going to bribe them? Teachers aren’t motivated by money.”

But they still like to be recognized and rewarded, said Cheri Shannon, who leads the Missouri Charter Public School Association.

Shannon helped install a salary bonus system when she was superintendent at the University Academy charter school in Kansas City.

It wasn’t perfect and the school tweaked it over time, she said, but every teacher earned points that brought them bonuses ranging from $1,500 to $4,000.
“It encourages people to do good work,” she said. “The measures were based on growth. We can’t control the ills outside the schools, but we’d better teach them well inside.”

At Olathe North, Delay worries about who would establish bonus standards and how they would negotiate so many teaching variables. But she said she was ready to be measured as a professional.

“Of course it’s scary,” she said. “But if you’re performing well, you shouldn’t be too concerned.”
Missouri Coordinating Board for Higher Education won't back change on financial aid

By MARÁ ROSE WILLIAMS

The Missouri Coordinating Board for Higher Education will not support legislation to distribute state financial aid equally to students attending public and private colleges.

On Thursday, the board voted 5-1 in favor of maintaining the current approach by Access Missouri, designed to help those from low-income households and first-generation college students.

Last year Access Missouri reached 43,000 students.

Under the current program, launched in 2007, students attending four-year private schools can get a maximum of $4,600, compared with $2,150 for students at public colleges.

Last year, the state spent $92 million on Access Missouri aid. Students at private schools got $3.9 million more than those at public colleges.

Public college presidents, such as Gary Forsee at the University of Missouri, want the awards equalized. “The state has an obligation to support its public institutions.”

Missouri State University President Michael T. Nietzel said, “It is rare public policy when you choose to subsidize with public money the more expensive alternative.”

Missouri law prohibits public schools from raising tuition above inflation. Private schools, however, get no state revenues and have to charge more for tuition.

Ron Slepitza, president of Avila University, agreed that more needs to be done to fund public higher education, “but it would be a mistake to alter Access Missouri. This program is working well. Balancing Missouri’s budget on the backs of low-income students is not the solution to properly funding public education.”

A Senate bill would set the maximum at $2,850, regardless of the four-year institution attended. The most for a two-year school would be $1,000.
Some board members said state should not summarily change a program that took 18 months to develop with all parties at the table.

Should the bill pass, it would become effective in 2014, a year after the law establishing Access Missouri would sunset.
Missouri higher education board recommends no change in scholarship

NO MU Mention

By DAVID A. LIEB/The Associated Press
February 11, 2010 | 6:18 p.m. CST

JEFFERSON CITY — Missouri's higher education board came out in opposition Thursday to legislation that would change the way scholarship money is divided among students at public and private universities.

About 47,000 students have received financial aid this year under the Access Missouri scholarship, which covers people from lower- and middle-class families.

The 2007 law that created the program allowed maximum scholarships of $1,000 annually for students at community colleges, $2,150 for those at public universities and $4,600 for students at private universities.

Supporters of the current scholarship model say it covers about one-quarter of the tuition and fees for students at either public or private universities. But Gov. Jay Nixon and some lawmakers want to change the program so that it provides the same amount of money to students at public and private schools.

A bill by Sen. Kurt Schaefer, R-Columbia, that is scheduled for a committee hearing on Wednesday would raise the maximum scholarship level to $1,250 for students at community colleges and set it at $2,850 for students at either public or private universities. The new scholarship amounts would begin in the 2014-15 academic year, allowing time for current freshmen to finish their degrees under the existing scholarship model.
The state Coordinating Board for Higher Education voted 5-1 Thursday to support the current scholarship amounts. That position will be shared with legislators considering the proposed changes.

"All sectors — public and private — agreed on these award amounts" when the law passed three years ago, said board member Mary Beth Luna Wolf of St. Louis. "The proposed legislation is not based on an agreement between the sectors."

The lone dissenting vote was cast by board chairman Lowell Kruse, who said conditions have changed since the 2007 law.

"State support for public institutions is not at the level that was anticipated at the time, and they are struggling," Kruse said.

A report released Thursday by the State Higher Education Executive Officers shows that Missouri ranks near the top nationally in recent funding increases for higher education. Funding rose by 6 percent from 2009 to 2010 — the fourth highest rate — and by 15 percent from 2008 to 2010, second only to North Dakota.

But Missouri was starting from a low point. The report ranked Missouri 45th among the 50 states in per capita funding for higher education in 2008.

Nixon has proposed funding cuts for public colleges and universities during the 2010-11 academic year to help balance the state budget.

He has not proposed cuts in student financial aid. But the current amount of state funding already is short of what is needed to provide students the maximum amount allowed under the Access Missouri program.

Students are getting scholarships of $780 this year at community colleges, $1,680 at public universities and $3,590 at private universities — about 78 percent of the maximum allowed under the law, said Leroy Wade, the assistant state higher education commissioner for financial assistance.

Of the nearly 47,000 students who received scholarships during the fall semester, 52 percent were at public universities, 29 percent at private institutions and 19 percent at community colleges, Wade said.
Missouri ranks second in nation for education funding increases

NO MU Mention

By The Associated Press
February 11, 2010 | 8:26 a.m. CST

JEFFERSON CITY — A new report ranks Missouri near the top nationally for recent funding increases to higher education.

A report being released Thursday by a group called State Higher Education Executive Officers said Missouri increased its funding for higher education by 6 percent from 2009 to 2010, and by 15 percent from 2008 to 2010.

Missouri's two-year percentage increase ranks second nationally behind North Dakota, and its one-year increase ranks fourth nationally. Missouri's increases came as a majority of states cut funding for higher education.

But Missouri had plenty of room for improvement. The report ranked Missouri 45th in per capita funding for higher education in 2008.

Gov. Jay Nixon has proposed funding cuts for colleges and universities next year to help balance the state budget.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

MU's Strickland Hall falls victim to graffiti

By Ettie Berneking
February 11, 2010 | 1:29 p.m. CST

COLUMBIA — **For the second time in eight days, MU's Strickland Hall was the target of graffiti, building coordinator Jennifer Arnold said.**

The graffiti, first reported to MU police on Wednesday, is similar to what was left in a separate incident on Feb. 5, Arnold said.

The graffiti tags could be seen Thursday along the walls in the north and south stairwells, and two more tags were found on benches outside classrooms on the first floor.

Maintenance crews were called in to paint over the markings. The damage will take at least 12 hours to clean up, said Brian Hanlon, part of the crew responsible for the job.

Emergency workers were called in to turn off fire alarms in the building to keep the paint fumes from setting them off.

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MUPD investigates Strickland Hall vandalism

Markings were found in the north stairwell and on benches.

By Lyndsie Manusos
Published Feb. 12, 2010

The MU Police Department responded to a report of vandalism Thursday at Strickland Hall.

MUPD Capt. Brian Weimer said the vandalism occurred sometime between 5 p.m. and 10 p.m. Wednesday. Markings were found in the north stairwell of Strickland Hall and on a couple benches in the building. The markings were written in very runny black ink or paint, Weimer said.

According to the Missouri Revised Statutes, a person commits the crime of institutional vandalism by knowingly vandalizing, defacing or damaging any place of religious purpose or worship, burials or locations to memorialize the dead and any school or educational facility or clinic.

Institutional vandalism is a type A misdemeanor, unless the amount of damages exceeds $1,000 to $5,000, in which case it would be classified as a class C or D felony, the statutes stated.

Vandalism is not a rare crime on campus, Weimer said.

"There is nothing unique about this," Weimer said. "Unfortunately if you look at our crime statistics, we have had vandalisms before."

Weimer also said the department does not have a cost estimate at this time and the report is still under investigation. "Hopefully we'll find out who did it and we'll take proper action at that time," Weimer said. "Every time one of these is reported, we try to get it cleaned up."

According to MUPD's Campus Safety and Crime Report posted on its Web site, there was one report of vandalism destruction of property in 2008 and three reports in 2007. The crime report for 2009 has not yet been posted.
In addition to her brother, survivors include two other brothers, Joe Faulkenberry of Eminence and V.T. Faulkenberry of Virginia Beach, Va.; and a sister, Paulette Williams of Eminence.
Phase II of student center enters final year of construction

After enclosing the middle section, workers can hang sheetrock.

By Zach Toombs
Published Feb. 12, 2010

The interior of the student center will take shape in the next month, as workers begin to hang sheetrock in the structure’s lower level, Student Unions Assistant Director Jeff Roberts said.

Roberts led a tour group of faculty members and students through the student center’s lower level Thursday. A student lounge area, six dining locations and offices for several student organizations will fill the area when Phase II of the project opens in January 2011.

“The main entrance will be all glassed in,” Roberts said. “It’ll be like the bookstore now — you can go up, you can go down. And that’s the entrance that’ll lead you to the bridge over the lounge area.”

The bridge above the lounge space will connect the Leadership Lounge and center for student involvement above the bookstore to the second floor of the structure’s west side.

“There’ll be some lounge space for students on the bridge as well,” Interior Design Coordinator Tracy Schultz said. “It’ll lead to some study areas and the Traditions Lounge.”

According to the student center’s Web site, the Traditions Lounge will incorporate design elements that recall MU traditions. The Web site also states Phase II will include another Mizzou Market, copy shop, ATMs, a bank and nine meeting rooms for students. The six dining options in Phase II will offer Italian food, Brazilian barbeque, sushi, deli and wraps, a coffee shop and a bakery.

Phase II will also house The Shack, the reincarnation of the restaurant that stood across from Jesse Hall for more than 60 years and will include portions of actual booths from the original. The student center’s Web site stated The Shack would offer live music, open mic comedy and poetry.

Schultz said the lounge would seat approximately 86 students.

“The area in the middle will mostly be soft seating, and we’ll have a fireplace in the middle of that,” Roberts said.

Construction on Phase I of the project, which contains the new bookstore, the center for student involvement and Truman’s Takeout, began in July 2007. Phase II construction began in spring 2009.
"There's no concern about falling behind schedule," Roberts said. "In fact, if anything, we're ahead of schedule."

Roberts attributes the project's progress to work done in June and July especially.

"We had a very productive summer," Roberts said. "The weather cooperated all throughout the summer. We didn't have hardly any bad weather for construction work until the rain we got in the fall."

The roof on the middle section of the student center was erected in November and allowed construction on the interior to continue through cold and rainy weather. The next step for construction crews is enclosing the middle section.

"Until they get the building fully closed and waterproofed, they can't start hanging the sheetrock," Assistant Facilities Manager Dale Smith said.
Coal Free Mizzou hosts expert panel

Four panelists spoke about steps Missouri can take towards clean energy.

By Megan Donohue
Published Feb. 12, 2010

Coal Free Mizzou hosted a Clean Energy Panel at 6 p.m. Wednesday night in the Fred W. Smith Forum, where a panel of four energy experts spoke and then answered questions.

Coal Free Mizzou Co-chairwoman Mallory Schillinger said its main goal was to inform.

"People always have questions and they don't know exactly where to go, so we might as well round up everyone and make them come here," Schillinger said.

MU Sustainability Coordinator Steve Burdic was first to speak. He focused on the American College & University Presidents' Climate Commitment and what MU is doing to reduce its carbon footprint.

He mentioned research MU is doing on renewable energy and ways to conserve energy and said MU is committed to reducing or eliminating coal use.

Burdic took the economy into consideration as well.

"We are not going to bankrupt ourselves to stop burning coal," Burdic said.

Jen Weaver, director of the environmental studies program, spoke next.

"For Missouri, it looks like, with the business-as-usual scenario, if we keep emitting greenhouse gasses at the current rate, we are going to move about two states down and one state west, so we will be somewhere between Houston, Texas and Laredo," Weaver said. "This will have a huge impact on Missouri agriculture."

Weaver also talked about potential alternative energy sources for MU and Missouri.

"We are not well situated for wind or for solar where the technologies are right now," Weaver said. "There may be things on the horizon that will make Missouri much more competitive in those areas, but right now there are very few places in Missouri where you can get sufficient wind generation."

One area with major possibilities is biomass, Weaver said.

"The best way for Missouri to go is wood," Weaver said. "We have a lot of biomass."
Through thinning our forests, Weaver said, we could provide up to 25 percent of our energy needs.

Research is still being done on how to sustainably thin forests and harvest other biofuels for a sustained period of time.

Sierra Club lawyer and volunteer Henry Robertson spoke next, and focused on potential legislative, efficient and conservation measures that can be taken while research on renewable energy continues.

He suggested building efficiency codes, which would require buildings to be built in ways that make them more energy efficient, and Combined Heat and Power, which yield energy and heat from one source instead of two.

"We need to motivate utilities to do efficiency, because right now they make more money selling electricity," Robertson said. "The more they sell, the more they make. It's not in their interest to sell less energy, but it is in our interest."

Finally, alumnus Jim Pierobon, vice president of policy and marketing at Standard Solar Inc., used Skype from his home in Maryland to speak, and focused on solar energy options for campuses like MU.

"Collectively, all of these flat roofed buildings and parking garages, together with the open spaces that are next to the Hearnes Center and Mizzou Arena and other places can generate megawatts worth of electricity," Pierobon said. "They can also serve as living laboratories for alternative energy classes."

He also suggested a Power Purchase Agreement, in which MU would allow a solar system to be constructed on campus and agree to buy power from that system for a certain amount of time.

This would have no up-front costs because MU would not own the system and wouldn't have to pay for installation. "I think we can do more," Pierobon said. "I think we must do more."
UM system introduces color-coded progress chart

Initiatives' progress will be tracked by green, yellow and red dots.

By Krystin Arneson
Published Feb. 12, 2010

UM system President Gary Forsee introduced a new plan to increase transparency and measure the goals set at last month's UM system Board of Curators meeting.

The chart of "system accountability measures" looks at data from the past several years on a variety of measures, such as student retention, applicant acceptance rates and diversity, and uses them as a starting point for future goals. The goals are listed as targets in their own column.

Forsee said the most unique thing about the project isn't the chart itself but the way progress is measured.

"The 'indicator' column will indicate progress made toward the three-year target with a colored stoplight," UM system spokeswoman Jennifer Hollingshead said.

A green dot will be placed in the indicator column for successful completion, a yellow one for "making progress" and a red dot for no progress.

This gives the university system a way to describe and convey the whole of what the institutions do, Forsee said.

"The main point is that there's a requirement, more so than perhaps ever for the university to be very open and transparent in what we do for the state," Forsee said. "We're a very complex organization."

He said tough economic times have exacerbated the movement for increased transparency.

"This whole issue of outcomes is a way of saying from federal and state governments that we expect those who receive funding to show what you have done with funding," he said.

Faculty Council Chairwoman Leona Rubin said part of the benefit of having a standard tracking method for each campus is it's an easy way to provide data to the Board of Curators and state constituents.
"It helps to have data that is trackable over an extended period of time and that gets reported with a similar format," she said.

The team valued quality more than quantity when compiling the list of measurements and benchmarks, Forsee said. One initial challenge was narrowing down the options and ideas for measurements.

"You could list 500 measures and list so much data that you wouldn't have time to digest it," he said. "We spent more time trying to make sure we had the right categories."

Forsee calls the 80 measures that made the cut "meaningful reference points" designed to show substance and emphasize the four parts of the system's mission: teaching, research, economic development and service.

Each campus might be looking at the same types of measures, but targets have been custom-fit to each to reflect their individual characteristics.

Progress toward the targets will be reviewed annually and charted.

"Many of these measures are annual, so this will be kind of an annual snapshot," Forsee said. "I would expect that as the results come in there will be a conversation with the group who originally put it together."

Rubin said the measures would probably "speak for themselves," but some data might not be enough to really get an accurate view of progress.

"The important part was determining what measures actually correlate with progress," she said. "Some might still argue that these measures do not tell the entire story."

Additionally, some measures are missing targets, such as the freshman applicant acceptance rate.

"As a state school we accept all students that qualify," Rubin said. "The fluctuation (in benchmark data) therefore would represent the relative number of applicants that qualified, and you cannot really set a target for such a measure."

Forsee said nothing was set in stone with the system because this is its inaugural year.

"It will be a very interactive discussion, but the first year is a work in progress," Forsee said. "This year will be about becoming comfortable with this."