Science News

New technique may help melanoma patients

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COLUMBIA, Mo., Feb. 25 (UPI) -- U.S. scientists say the use of laser-induced ultrasound could help physicians locate the general area of a lymph node where melanoma cells might reside.

University of Missouri researchers said knowing the stage of a patient's melanoma is important when choosing the best course of treatment. When the cancer has progressed to the lymph nodes, a more aggressive treatment is needed, but examining an entire lymph node for cancer takes much effort and time.

The laser-induced ultrasound technique could help doctors identify the stage of melanoma with more accuracy and speed.

"This method can be used to determine if the cancer has spread from stage 2, where the melanoma is still just in the skin lesion, to stage 3, where the melanoma has spread to the lymph nodes," said Assistant Professor John Viator. "If the cancer is still at stage 2, a simple procedure can remove that lesion. If the cancer has progressed from the initial skin lesion into the lymphatic region and possibly the bloodstream, doctors have to make serious decisions about patient care."

In the study, Viator took human cancer cells and placed them inside canine lymph nodes. Then, using the laser, he determined the best ways to locate the cancer cells. The next step, he said, is to try the procedure using human lymph nodes.

The research is reported in Journal of Biomedical Engineering.
New College Try

02/26/2010

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Debate over Access Missouri, the state’s signature financial aid program for college students, is at a turning point.

State lawmakers are advancing legislation to revamp the $90 million-plus needs-based scholarship system. A high-level summit of higher education leaders is scheduled for mid-March "to establish a common framework and a potential agreement to redesign Access Missouri in order to provide the greatest benefits to Missouri citizens." These are promising developments.

But they require urgent action and carry heavy expectations.

Access Missouri's status as a two-tier system for students enrolled at four-year institutions has moved the debate to the forefront. Students at private institutions are eligible for awards of up $4,600, more than twice the $2,150 maximum amount available to their peers at public four-year institutions. Students at community colleges may receive awards of up to $1,000.

Students at private institutions receive higher awards to help them meet higher tuition and fees. The program thus is intended to respect "student choice" and support diversity in Missouri higher educational institutions.

Legislation backed by Gov. Jay Nixon would scrap this system and offer uniform maximum grants of $2,850, with no distinction between students at private and public institutions.

Students are worried about the uncertainty — and have expressed their concerns at public hearings. They should take comfort in knowing that no one has proposed cutting funding. And, under pending legislation, award caps wouldn't change until the 2014-2015 school year.

The greater concern to students should be the lack of a convincing justification for the current awards scheme.

The value to students and taxpayers of setting different award ranges based on an institution's status isn't clear. In 2008-2009, for example, awards to students at three relatively small, private four-year institutions in Missouri — Columbia College, Drury University and Lindenwood University — exceeded all awards to community college students statewide. Indeed, those accounted for 17 percent of all awards that year.

This large concentration no doubt reflects the institutions' interest and skill in recruiting and enrolling students eligible for aid. If graduation rates for these students also are strong, it could
be seen as an excellent investment.

How well are specific Missouri colleges and universities serving the students who receive state financial aid? What is a fair way of measuring this performance? The problem is that the public has no ready way of knowing.

That needs to change — and it already has begun.

As part of a program by The Education Trust, a Washington-based non-profit, the University of Missouri is one of 24 public university systems across the country that have opened their books to disclose performance data relating to public financial aid.

Soon, all private and public universities in Missouri will be in the game. Federal regulations going into effect later this year will require all colleges and universities that participate in the Pell Grant program to begin to gather this data.

That will offer an unprecedented opportunity to start rethinking and remaking Access Missouri around actual performance data. The program isn't a pie to be divvied up by institutional insiders behind closed doors. The debate cannot be limited to university officials and their patron politicians. Independent advocates for student access also must be at the table.

The future belongs to Missouri colleges and universities, public or private, two-year or four, that walk the talk when it comes to student access and success — and can prove it.
Scholarship plan advances in Senate

NO MU Mention

By Terry Ganey

JEFFERSON CITY — The Senate Education Committee voted 6-3 yesterday to give a “do pass” recommendation to a plan equalizing payments to college students under the Access Missouri scholarship program.

The program now provides a maximum award of $1,000 for students attending two-year community colleges, $2,150 for students attending four-year public colleges and $4,600 for students at four-year private colleges.

The bill sponsored by Sen. Kurt Schaefer, R-Columbia, would provide $1,500 to students attending two-year community colleges and $2,850 to students attending four-year institutions, public and private. It would go into effect for the 2014 school year.

Schaefer said given the state’s tight financial situation with core cuts and tuition caps affecting public colleges, it wasn’t fair for individual private college students to get more than twice as much scholarship money.

Public and private university officials are meeting to resolve differences over the issue. Committee Chairman David Pearce, R-Warrensburg, said that although they might be able to reach a compromise, advancing the bill will keep the discussion going.

About $95 million has been appropriated for Access Missouri this year.

The current program is scheduled to expire in 2013.
Eye doctors see chance to help

Need for care is great post-quake.

By T.J. Greaney

Thursday, February 25, 2014

Two University of Missouri Health Care ophthalmologists will leave tomorrow for a weeklong trip to Haiti, hoping to address a massive need for eye care among people still digging out from the earthquake.

Jacob Brubaker and James Fox, ophthalmology residents at MU’s Mason Eye Institute, plan to volunteer their services through New Reality International, a California-based charity.

The two doctors said they don’t know exactly what to expect, but they will come hauling bags of equipment and about 700 donated pairs of eyeglasses. They will be based out of a medical clinic in Fond Parisien, a town of about 20,000 east of Port-au-Prince. From there, they’ll make trips to other satellite clinics in nearby rural areas.

Early reports from other volunteers in the region indicate that the needs in Haiti run the gamut from people suffering from major trauma to the eye after being hit by falling debris to people who simply have never been able to afford proper eye care. “We anticipate a lot of infections; we anticipate some trauma that is residual.” Fox said. “We know there is one medical student, a young woman, who basically had a brick fall on her face and has still not received eye care for her injuries.”

But the doctors also will have some limitations on their work. Unable to haul the heavy phoropter device used in offices to determine prescriptions, they’ll have to rely on simple “flippers.” a series of lenses flipped over a patient’s eyes. After getting a number, the doctors will have to rummage through the donated eyeglasses, many from the Lions Eye Bank, to find an approximate match. “It’s a little bit rudimentary, but it’s what we have,” Brubaker said. “We’ll try to get them as close as possible from the donated glasses.”

The doctors also will be unable to do any internal eye surgeries, such as cataract removal. The doctors will bring eye implants for use in the event they are forced to remove infected or damaged eyes that can’t be healed.
Brubaker, 30, has two bits of experience relevant to the coming trip. He is fluent in French, a language he picked up while on a religious mission in Quebec and attending medical school in Montreal.

Brubaker also went on a medical mission to Senegal and came away with an experience that he said was demanding, draining and incredibly rewarding.

“We were there for about eight days, and we saw 1,700 patients,” he said. “When we started, it was mostly people from the area coming in to see us, but as word got out, the surrounding communities started showing up. By the end of the week, people were coming from so far away that their languages were completely different. We had four or five different translators.”

Fox said he hopes this is the first of several trips. He wants to be part of a sustained effort led by New Reality to reach out to the island nation in 2010 and beyond.

“I think I speak for both of us when I say this is why we became doctors,” Fox said. “And especially ophthalmologists — we can go overseas and make a lasting difference in a short period of time.”

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Outlook worsens for state budget

NO MU Mention

By Terry Ganey

Thursday, February 25, 2010

JEFFERSON CITY — The state’s revenue picture, already troubled, is getting bleaker.

Missouri Budget Director Linda Luebbering said Thursday that talks are under way to revise downward anticipated tax receipts — projections that are used to develop the state budget for the upcoming fiscal year.

Luebbering said February tax revenues are worse than expected and worse than January’s, which prompted Gov. Jay Nixon to cut an additional $74 million from the current year’s budget.

On top of falling revenues, Nixon’s budget for next year was based on the anticipated receipt of $300 million in federal funds, which appears to have evaporated.

Nixon met Thursday with Senate leaders including Appropriations Committee Chairman Rob Mayer, R-Dexter, to discuss the budget situation.

“Whether or not we get that $300 million, we still have to address the bigger problem,” Luebbering said.

The eroding economy has diminished state tax revenues as never before since the Depression. Net general revenue collections for January decreased by 22.4 percent compared to those for January 2009, from $722.8 million to $561.2 million.

Luebbering said today that February’s numbers, which will become final next week, appear to be worse.

State budget officials and leaders of the House and Senate appropriations committees develop a consensus revenue estimate each year that is used to prepare the state’s spending plan. Because the House Budget Committee is getting ready to draft its version of the budget, the number might be revised downward based on February’s tax collections.

The original number calculated for the upcoming fiscal year predicted modest recovery and below-average growth of 3.6 percent. Budget officials are now adopting spending contingencies based on growth of 2.6 percent.
So far, more than $700 million in state spending has been sliced from the $23.7 billion budget lawmakers approved last year. Looking into the future, things might be worse.

With no federal stabilization money on the horizon, Nixon might have to make more cuts to deal with shortfalls in 2012. Luebbering said the budget might be $800 million out of balance by 2012.

“There are programs we simply can no longer afford because the revenue is not going to generate enough money to pay for everything,” Luebbering said.

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MU veterans to get college credit for military coursework

By Nicole Lebsack
February 26, 2010 | 12:01 a.m. CST

COLUMBIA — Veterans at MU are set to collect the benefits of a plan to accept academic credit for coursework done during active military service.

The proposal, approved last week by MU Faculty Council, states that MU will accept up to nine transfer credits for military coursework taken during service. The policy is set to take effect in the fall semester, said Carol Fleisher, faculty adviser for the Mizzou Student Veterans Association.

Harry Tyrer, a council member and professor in the electrical and computer engineering department, explained why the council approved the plan.

“We're in a set of wars overseas and these men, when they come back, will want to have training,” he said. “In whatever way we can help them, we should.”

Tom Phillips, former council chairman, said the council will rely partially on the American Council on Education’s recommendations on which courses should transfer, but the final decision will rest with individual departments.

Veterans could also receive credit for introductory-level military science courses for honorable service, he said.

Because the plan will most likely involve lower-level classes, senior secondary education major Nick Kundert said he knows the plan won't affect him but appreciates the benefits it will give to prospective students.

“I think it will be great for vets who are just coming in and starting their education,” said Kundert, who worked as a radio operator in the Marine Corps and is the internal vice president of the student veterans association.
The group's vice president, Kevin Jones, also said he approves.

"The fact that Mizzou has actually agreed to accept transfer credits is a big step, and I think it will give a good competitive edge to the university," said Jones, a former sergeant in the Marine Corps.

Tyrer expects the benefits will go beyond simply adding to a veteran's transcript.

"My experience has been that the more mature the individual, the more focused he or she becomes in their studies, and the more successful they will be," he said.

"Furthermore, if there's a way to reduce the basic work that they need to take, the greater number of more advanced courses they can take. It's a win-win."
The Tribune's View

State bonds
Lawmakers missing a moment

NO MENTION

By Henry J. Waters III

Thursday, February 25, 2010

Leaders in the Missouri General Assembly are coming out against the issuance of state capital improvement bonds proposed by Rep. Chris Kelly and House Floor Leader Steven Tilley, a bipartisan team whose idea was supported by legislative leaders last year.

House Speaker Ron Richard and Senate President Pro Tem Charlie Shields, joined by Democrat House Minority Leader Paul LeVota, say now is not the time for the state to take on more debt. “There’s not an appetite for it,” LeVota said.

But now is the perfect time to do the bond issue. It’s the ideal sort of economic stimulus, not to mention the only way to do scores of badly needed projects on campuses and elsewhere around the state, the beneficiaries of which certainly do have an “appetite for it.”

We are not likely to see a more propitious time. Construction costs and interest rates are lower than they might be ever again. Expiring annual budget costs of an earlier bond issue leave room for another issue without raising taxes. Shovel-ready projects all around the state would create jobs and meet postponed needs. A listing of these projects would gain wide support.

Kelly and Tilley propose issuing bonds worth perhaps $800 million that can be done right now at historically low cost and bring transformational benefit throughout the state. Shortsighted lawmakers should remove their blinkers and lead. The time is right.

HIW III
A month into their session, Missouri's legislators haven't done much but talk. Considering what they're saying, that's probably for the best. What's worrisome is that at least some of the rhetoric is likely to result in action we, if not they, will have cause to regret.

The most important case in point was highlighted by Rep. Chris Kelly in Tuesday's Missourian. Chris, as you know, has been promoting for more than a year now an $800 million bond issue to build or repair much-needed facilities on campuses throughout the state. Last year the House passed the proposal, which was and still is co-sponsored by Rep. Steve Tilley, the Republican floor leader. Parliamentary stalling killed it in the Senate.

This year, with the need greater, the construction industry hungrier and the interest rate lower, leaders of both House and Senate are saying no. Chris doesn't understand their reasoning. Neither do I. In his essay, he demolishes their arguments. But barring a legislative miracle, the bond issue is as dead as the brains of its executioners.

There's more, much more.

Take, for instance, the House bill that would address a possible shortfall in the governor's budget by requiring him to play the lottery. Reading Ben Wieder's report in Tuesday's paper, I assumed it was just a joke until I got to the part where Republican heavyweights said they support the bill. Then I quit laughing. (The bill's sponsor. Rep. Mark Parkinson, told Ben he doesn't play the lottery. "I think it's a self-imposed tax on stupidity," he said. Exactly.)
Meanwhile, the budget ax is poised to fall on those least able to defend themselves. Last week the House Appropriations Committee for Health, Mental Health and Social services proposed that funding be slashed for a range of programs that help the state's poorest and most vulnerable citizens. The Missourian reported that Sunday.

The committee wants to cut half the funding for domestic violence shelters, such as The Shelter in Columbia, which currently serve 40,000 women and children statewide and already had to turn away 9,000 more last year. Also cut would be $9.5 million from the health centers that serve the poor, including the Family Health Center of Boone County. Not even the pregnancy crisis centers that provide alternatives to abortion would be spared.

Listening to the Republican leadership, you'd never know it was the federal stimulus funding that has staved off such draconian reductions so far. The balanced budget amendment they're urging Congress to support would have made that assistance more difficult if not impossible to provide. Of course, nobody said consistency was a virtue in partisan politics.

They appear unable to solve our state's problems, but some legislators don't hesitate to wander beyond their competence. Sen. Bill Stouffer, who is running for the Republican nomination to oppose Congressman Ike Skelton, is sponsoring a resolution urging Congress to keep the "don't ask, don't tell" policy the president and his top military advisers want to end. He's also pushing another resolution opposing the "cap and trade" approach to slowing global warming.

Partisanship also got the better of Boone County's Sen. Kurt Shaefer when he criticized Gov. Nixon for using $23 million in federal money to save the old railroad bridge at Boonville instead of a new cancer hospital in Columbia. A spokesman for the governor had to point out that the money was designated specifically for railroad projects.

Our state is facing hard times. Urgent needs outrun available resources. So far, the legislative response looks from here to be short-sighted, partisan and ideological. The likelihood that our rulers' actions will speak even louder than their words doesn't give us much room for optimism.

George Kennedy is a former managing editor at the Missourian and professor emeritus at the Missouri School of Journalism.
BUSINESS PROFILE

Pediatric brace specialist establishes orthotic business

By Roger Meissen From Missouribusiness.net

Samuel Fender flashed a big smile at orthotist Lynne Snyder as she fitted the 4-year-old with new leg braces decorated with race cars. Samuel’s quadriplegic cerebral palsy causes contracture that, without braces, could shorten his muscles to the point that he would need surgery.

Snyder creates orthotic leg and body braces for children such as Samuel. She started her Columbia-based business last June because she saw a need and an opportunity.

"A lot of the children’s families were traveling outside the area to receive their braces, and traveling in this difficult economy just wasn’t really an option," Snyder said.

Snyder Brace Inc. is the only brace business in mid-Missouri that caters to children, she said.

“I was terrified having never really owned or ran a business of my own before,” she said. “I know my business, but I didn’t know business.”

Snyder turned to University of Missouri Extension’s Small Business and Technology Development Centers for help.

“Having someone partner with me — with the resources and expertise to make it a reality — was a lifesaver,” she said.

MU Business Development Specialist Virgil Woolridge counseled Snyder on leasing her office, helped with her business plan and was just a phone call away when new hurdles presented themselves.

“We know that starting a business is a risky venture, so people like Lynne have to go in with all the information possible to make the right decision,” Woolridge said. “My job is not to tell someone to go into business or not go into business but rather to sit down with each person, analyze the situation and let them make the decision.”

Woolridge noted that 80 percent of new job growth in Missouri comes from small businesses and said that the hard economic times can offer opportunities for business.

“A lot of the data indicates that a downturn like this can be a very good time to start a business,” he said. “Particularly if you are an individual who lost your job or was laid off, this might be an excellent time to actually start your business.”

SBTDC specialists serve clients throughout the state and provide counseling at no charge to new and existing businesses. The centers also offer workshops in different areas for a small fee.

For Snyder, the rewards go beyond getting her business off to a solid start.

“Taking (children) who would not otherwise be able to stand and helping them walk is amazing,” she said. “I know children who ice skate, who roller skate and, without the braces, would otherwise not have that opportunity. Seeing the tears of joy in their eyes and parents’ eyes is why I do this.”

Because of her entrepreneurial success, Snyder’s firm was among 19 small businesses from around the state that participated in the Missouri SBTDC/TTAC Client Showcase on Jan. 27 in Jefferson City. Successful entrepreneurs told state legislators of their firms’ contributions to Missouri’s economic and job development.

Lynne Snyder watches Grace Fender as she tests some adjustments to her braces.
Groups debate MU's future without coal

Alternative energy is cleaner but less cost effective.

By Megan Donohue
Published Feb. 26, 2010

The MU power plant burns 130,000 tons of coal annually to provide utility for more than 14 million square feet of facilities on the university's main campus.

Student groups such as Coal Free Mizzou and Sustain Mizzou are concerned with coal’s effect on the environment, Coal Free Mizzou spokeswoman Melissa Vatterott said.

"Although the planet has natural changes in temperature and climate over millions of years, our additions of these added chemicals into the air is accelerating these things," Vatterott said. "In the end, we are going to run out of coal, and it will be more costly in terms of how it affects the environment and human health."

Coal Free Mizzou was created last semester amid a campaign conducted by the Sierra Club, which is leading students to protest coal use on 35 campuses across the country. Group members are calling for a complete reduction of MU’s coal use, but they don’t have a specific time frame for that reduction.

MU is taking steps to reduce its coal use, but student protesters shouldn’t expect a "quick fix." To power the 16.5 million square feet of facilities on MU’s main campus, coal is a much cheaper option than alternative energy.

"MU administrators search continually for the most efficient, environmentally friendly ways to keep our campus running," Chancellor Brady Deaton said in a statement provided for The Maneater.

Expensive alternatives

There are many options for the university to use instead of coal, but the issue is finding the right fit and cost.

"There are dozens of examples of alternatives, including natural gas, biomass, geothermal, as well as wind and solar," said Bruce Nilles, director for Sierra Club's national coal campaign.

Vatterott said MU is installing a new biomass boiler that will offset MU's coal usage by up to 25 percent but there are other things the university could be doing.

It takes about two tons of biomass to equal the same energy as one ton of MU's coal, Campus Facilities spokeswoman Karlan Seville said.

"The future cost of biomass and coal are uncertain and are based on market conditions, however, we expect that the biomass costs will continue to be comparable to coal," Seville said.

Students and others are calling for solar energy as a cost-efficient alternative. Alumnus Jim Pierobon, vice-president of policy and marketing at Standard Solar Inc., said solar energy is a very viable possibility for a university 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.
Groups, such as the MU College Republicans have taken issue with Coal Free Mizzou's requests, saying Sierra Club fed facts to students without creating a concrete solution.

"In my mind, Coal Free Mizzou consists of nothing more than a pawn of the Sierra Club," MU College Republicans member Brett Dinkins said.

Dinkins said a lot of people signing the clean coal petitions don't even know what they would do.

"I am sure there are a lot of good people in these groups, but I don't think they realize that they are being told what to do and what they are being told to do is very hard and fast," Dinkins said. "Even Coal Free Mizzou doesn't have an idea of what we need to go to in order to get off of coal. Until they can present this idea, I think they need to step back and see what they are doing."

The costs would actually be higher in the long run due to the inefficiency of power plants, Nilles said.

"Most of these coal plants are really old, so we are not taking a brand new car and saying crush it and turn it into something else," Nilles said. "We have very old coal plants many of them that are well beyond their life expectancy, and that is what happens with many of these campuses."

Although the MU power plant still runs primarily on coal, it is neither past its life expectancy nor inefficient, according to the Environmental Protection Agency Web site.

The EPA states the power plant provides MU "with a very efficient, reliable, and cost effective method to meet its energy needs in an environmentally positive manner."

Other campuses

Many other campuses have either already committed to transition off coal in the near future or are moving in that direction.

"What we've seen is as campuses get serious about doing their part on global warming one of the first things they do is get rid of their old coal power plants," Nilles said. "We are down to 60, and two of them are studying how to get off of them."

Ball State University has drawn up a plan to trade coal for one of the world's biggest geothermal heating plants, and other universities, including the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Columbia University and Penn State University are considering their options.

"Madison just appropriated money to get rid of their coal plant," Nilles said. "North Carolina announced this past Friday that it was putting together a task force, including the Sierra Club, to get beyond coal."

Virginia Tech University has taken a different route by creating its own goal to be 80 percent below 1990 level emissions by 2050. Virginia Tech has declined signing any of the official, popular statements and promises, such as the American College & University Presidents' Climate Commitment, which outlines a set of steps toward cleaner energy, but is still willing to talk with activists.

Steps toward cleaner energy

Deaton and UM system President Gary Forsee signed the Climate Commitment, which means the university must initiate the development of a comprehensive plan to achieve climate neutrality.

Although Forsee signed the Climate Commitment, he was unwilling to support the recent cap-and-trade legislation.

"As currently written, we have grave concerns and oppose this legislation for the detrimental impact it will have on the University of Missouri system," Forsee said in his Nov. 17, 2009, letter to Rep. Blaine Luetkemeyer, R-Mo.
Forsee said his main problem with cap-and-trade was the price increases because it would increase energy costs up to 50 percent. He also said the UM system has been making changes and will continue to make changes at a more realistic pace.

MU has won 14 international, national and state awards for energy management techniques, including the 2008 Missouri Waste Control Coalition’s Outstanding Achievement Award based on MU replacing a portion of their coal with old tires.

The Sustainable Endowments Institute also graded MU overall "B-," and an "A" in the area of climate change and energy.

Besides installing a biomass boiler, the university has been successful in using corncobs, waste wood and switch grass as alternative fuels, Seville said. Additionally, coal fly ash, a harmful byproduct of burning coal, is returned to the mine instead of being deposited in landfills, Seville said.

And though MU is taking steps toward cleaner energy to answer students' concerns, it's doing this at a more realistic pace than students wanted last semester.

"The university is committed to not burning coal anymore and we're going to do that as fast as we possibly can," Sustainability Coordinator Steve Burdic said. "We are not going to bankrupt ourselves to stop burning coal."
Study abroad applications increase from last year

*Despite the rocky economic state worldwide, students continue to travel.*

By Natalia Allen  
Published Feb. 26, 2010

Study abroad applications for the next summer, fall and academic year are up 41 percent from this point last year, Study Abroad Director Barbara Lindeman said. Although the deadline passed Monday, the International Center is still receiving applications.

Lindeman said continued growth in study abroad participation is a concrete demonstration of commitment to obtaining a more global worldview.

"One of the things that the current economic downturn clearly has demonstrated is that the world's economies are inextricably connected," Lindeman said. "The fact that study abroad participation is continuing to increase in this economic climate demonstrates to me the high value that students and their parents place on gaining an understanding of people and cultures outside the U.S."

MU offers financial aid for students studying abroad based on the student's eligibility for aid and the cost of the particular study abroad program. Lindeman said the university offers both subsidized and unsubsidized loans as needed.

"Students who participate in MU supported study abroad programs in nearly all cases can apply all of their state, federal and institutional financial aid toward the cost of their study abroad programs," Lindeman said.

Senior Monica Germinario said she was able to study abroad through financial aid offered by the university.

"Money is definitely a deciding factor, but Mizzou helped make it affordable," Germinario said.

She also stressed the convenience of summer study abroad programs.

"Summer programs usually have one all-inclusive price and don't always require visas and other long-term expenses," Germinario said. "I think the increased number of summer program applicants reflects the economy."

According to the International Center Web site, the number of MU students studying abroad has increased every year since the 2001-2002 academic year.

Lindeman said the number of MU students who choose to study abroad has nearly tripled in the past decade. During 2008-2009, the most recent year for which numbers of study abroad participants have been reported, 1,094 MU students studied abroad.

"I believe that continued growth in study abroad participation is a concrete demonstration of commitment to obtaining a more global worldview, which will help students succeed in whatever career they choose," Lindeman said.
Student parents, families seek improved accessibility

Budget concerns cause difficulties for child care to make accommodations.

By Megan Pearl
Published Feb. 26, 2010

Campus organizations are creating a task force to make campus a more accessible environment for students who are also parents.

"The individuals that I have worked with have brainstormed some of the places where the university lacks in being a family-friendly environment," Graduate Professional Council President Sarah Symonds said.

Among the issues of concern are child care, lactation rooms, maternity leave policies and other resources for student parents.

"Imagine you're a mother, and you're going to school and looking for a place to breast feed," Missouri Students Association President Tim Noce said in defense of the bill. "Would you be comfortable randomly asking someone, 'Where can I breast feed my baby?' No. We're trying to get all these resources into one area."

MSA passed the bill condoning the task force through the Senate on Wednesday. The legislation will be deliberated in GPC next week.

MSA amended the resolution due to Operations Committee member Justin Mohn's concerns about the phrase "family-friendly."

"Family-friendly is really vague," Mohn said. "Is my idea of family-friendly the same as everyone else's?"

Mohn suggested the example of certain people not viewing parents who are homosexual as families and said he wouldn't want to see this reflected in the committee somehow. The wording was altered to reflect making campus more accessible to non-traditional students rather than "family-friendly."

After the amendment, the bill passed unopposed.

Symonds said the committee also plans to work with Mizzou Families Involved Together, an organization for student parents that has been focusing on obtaining a space for students to study where they can also bring their children.

"During the fall semester, issues were brought to my attention, and the first idea was to make a women-friendly task force, but as we looked into it, it seemed like families needed to be targeted," Symonds said about the origin of the committee. "We want to work with the graduate school to get numbers."

The university does not keep track of which students have children or families.

"Everything will come down to money, we understand that," Symonds said.

One of the biggest objectives of the group will be improving child care through the hours of service.

"The current daycare system is from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., and if you're late you are charged a fee," Symonds said. "There is Pigskin Preschool during football games but no equivalent for basketball games or night classes."
Julia Shea, who has been the director of the Student Parent Center for 15 years, said more hours and availability would require more money to expand the facilities and also to pay more employees.

State law requires 35 square feet for every child. Also, there must be a certain number of adults depending on the number of children and their ages.

"I know that our hours are a bit of a problem for some graduate and nursing students, but because of our budget situation we don't have the finances to extend for staffing," Shea said.

The facility is licensed for 44 children, and there is a waiting list for those who did not get in.

"In order to get more money, I'd need more children, but to have more children, I need more space," Shea said. "It's a vicious circle."

Shea said the big concern for the Student Parent Center is if its budget were cut, there would be no other services or support available at the university.

"It would severely disrupt resources for students who are parents or will be parents at the university," Shea said.
CDS works to accommodate enrollment increase

Dining halls are expanding options while Rollins is out of service.

By Rachel Allred
Published Feb. 26, 2010

MU has faced record enrollment two of the last three years, and students have started to notice space tightening where they live, eat and go to class. In this second part of a four-part series, The Maneater focuses on dining halls and what the university has done to accommodate the growing student population.

Waiting in long lines, bumping into people and having difficulty finding a seat is typical when going to Eva J's and other campus dining halls to eat lunch.

Freshman Caitlin Starke said she's waited in line for 30 minutes to get food, and sometimes she doesn't get the food she wants.

"It's more of an annoyance," Starke said. "If I see that a line's long, I just won't eat it. So maybe instead of getting grilled chicken, I'll get pasta because the line is shorter."

Starke said after she receives her food, she sometimes has to circle the dining hall to find an open seat.

MU's increased number of students eating at dining halls has compelled Campus Dining Services to make changes to better accommodate the number of patrons, and student groups have explored potential solutions, including rolling hours and webcams to show how crowded a place is at any given time.

Four all-you-care-to-eat locations and five take-out shops are available to students this semester. Campus Dining Services Marketing Specialist Andrew Lough said adjustments have been made to those dining halls to make up for the Rollins dining hall being closed for renovation this semester.

"We're expanding some options this semester, particularly with Rollins being closed," Lough said. "We've added some tables in a few places to accommodate for that. We're also offering some expanded take-out options through Eva J's."

Take-out options have been beneficial to students, especially during the lunch rush hour, Lough said.

"That's been pretty well-received," Lough said. "It's a really good option for students who are in a hurry and don't want to fight the crowds. The Emporium is also open over lunch. They've added pizza by the slice and other items to make it a more viable lunch instead of just a place to get snacks."

Lough said campus dining locations have been able to handle the growth of the student population, and CDS tries to plan ahead when building and renovating dining halls.

"We try to stay ahead of the curve so we're not always right at our max capacity," Lough said. "We've got a little bit of buffer built in, which has turned out to be really good because enrollment has exceeded expectations."

Despite the buffer, students often face crowds and long lines. Lough said dining halls are most crowded between 11:50 a.m. and 12:10 p.m. The newest dining hall, Plaza 900, experiences the most traffic, which is fitting because it has the highest max capacity and most square footage, Lough said. Plaza serves about 2,600 students per weekday during the spring semester.
Starke and Hannah Bauer said they're often stuck in crowds when they go to eat at the Pavilion at Dobbs dining hall. Starke and Bauer usually eat lunch at 11 a.m. and dinner at 5 p.m.

“It's usually crowded because those are the peak hours,” Bauer said.

To compensate for the amount of work that has to be done to serve the growing student population, CDS has about 185 full-time employees and 520 student employees.

“Both of those numbers are higher than they have been the last few years,” Lough said. “We rely heavily on student labor.”

Lough said opening the second phase of the student center is expected to ease some of the strain and congestion because it will offer more retail dining options.

Longer hours are also being considered for some of the dining halls. Lough said it is difficult to keep some dining halls open late because they are located inside residence halls, which lock at 11 p.m.

When renovations are complete, Rollins will have the ability to stay open later due to an alternate entrance.

“One of the things students can look forward to when Rollins opens back up is the potential of extended hours,” Lough said. “Part of the renovation includes an exterior entrance.”

Bauer said it seems CDS is trying to ease the congestion, and future developments would make things more convenient.

“I think they're kind of already addressing the problem with building the new Brady Commons,” Bauer said. “The new places to eat will help out a lot. It will be nice to have more fast food on campus, and older students could just go there.”

Lough said the increased number of dining hall patrons creates a positive dynamic of upper and underclassmen.

“We've seen an increase in students who live off campus dining in resident locations, which we're very happy to see,” Lough said. “It does create an extra strain on some of our systems.”
New program educates instructors on suicide

The program aims to take a preventive approach to suicide.

By Kara Henderson
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Suicide is the 11th highest cause of death in the U.S., and 16.9 percent of high school students were reported to have seriously considered suicide in the past year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

But reports on the number of suicide deaths each year do not accurately portray the breadth of this issue, according to the National Institute for Mental Health. For each death by suicide, there are also 12 to 25 non-fatal incidents in people 15 to 24 years old.

“When you consider the fact that each of these statistics are an actual life, each number is one too many,” said Scott Perkins, Missouri Institute of Mental Health project director.

James Koller, co-director of the Center for the Advancement of Mental Health Practices in the Schools, said suicide is hard to define and prevent.

“Suicide is a pervasive, all-encompassing problem that is hard to deal with,” Koller said.

MU is one of many institutions creating a program to educate the public on this problem, upon receiving a three-year grant from the Missouri Department of Mental Health and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

The statewide program, Train the Trainer, was created to properly instruct educators how to recognize the warning signs and risk factors associated with suicide. These risks include a history of depression or mental illness, alcohol and drug abuse, divorce or negative family environment and traumatic events such as breakups.

The program is targeted at educators and other school faculty because they have a high level of interaction with students and therefore would be capable of noticing a negative change in personality or conduct, according to an MU news release.

“When you have people who can spot warning signs, that gives (at-risk students) the freedom and permission to open up,” Perkins said.

Early recognition of a student at risk for suicide is a key component in prevention of death or self-injury.

“Many school district policies are reactive and do little to prevent suicide,” Koller said. “Our whole focus is to be preventative, rather than waiting for the problem.”

The three-credit hour program is available online through the MU Center for Distance and Independent Study.

“Dr. Koller approaches the subject matter with sensitivity so that students come away with practical skills to handle a variety of difficult situations,” CDIS Associate Director Gera Burton said.

Train the Trainer is not the only action being taken to diminish suicide-caused death in Missouri. College campuses across the state, including MU, launched the Ask, Listen, Refer program last year, targeted specifically to train college students on ways to recognize those at risk and prevent suicide.
The Wellness Resource Center also provides an informational Web site that caters specifically to suicide and its prevention, as well as upcoming training opportunities and links to more helpful information.