Road to diversity course requirement has bumps, hurdles

By Katy Bergen
March 3, 2010 | 12:01 a.m. CST

COLUMBIA — Discussions at a town hall meeting held in light of a racist incident at the Gaines/Oldham Black Culture Center revealed frustrations with a system that has yet to incorporate an undergraduate diversity course requirement at MU.

Audience members cheered as Yantezia Patrick, co-chairwoman of Four Front Minority Presidents Council, criticized administrators for slow progress on the diversity course requirement, which the Legion of Black Collegians requested five years ago in a letter (PDF, 1.6 MB) to Chancellor Brady Deaton. (Deaton's response is here.)

But although administrators agreed that a diversity course requirement is needed at MU and could be enacted as early as next year, recommending new curriculum is not a simple process. Such a requirement would not be one course but any of a number of existing courses that meet certain standards, including incorporating discussions on stereotypes and different points of view into the classroom.

Finding ways to incorporate requirement

The need for a diversity course requirement is No. 1 on a list of issues being evaluated by a Faculty Council task force formed last semester to review MU’s general education policy, said Leona Rubin, chairwoman of the MU Faculty Council. The task force will evaluate, among other things, how a diversity course requirement would fit into MU’s curriculum.

“The diversity requirement is not something you can evaluate in isolation,” Rubin said.

Another task force on campus has been working toward incorporating diversity-intensive classes. Roger Worthington, chief diversity officer, was selected in December 2005 to lead a Campus Climate and Training Task Force, which, among other things, aims to address shortcomings in diversity at MU.
The campus climate task force submitted a diversity course requirement proposal last spring. The Faculty Council, which was planning a general education program review this year, decided to incorporate the diversity course requirement issue into its Task Force's agenda. Four Front, together with the Legion of Black Collegians, submitted a proposal to the Faculty Council task force as well three weeks ago.

Worthington said a diversity requirement is not the same thing as taking a diversity course. Both the chancellor's task force and Four Front's proposals involve examining what existing MU classes would possibly meet a diversity learning objective. With this system, students could simultaneously fulfill requirements — taking classes that count for both diversity and behavioral or social sciences. No new classes, curriculum or teacher would be added, but curriculum would be tweaked to accommodate diversity learning objectives.

Worthington said diversity can be broadly defined. "There are additional dimensions to diversity that we know are very important to acknowledge," he said.

The Chancellor's Diversity Initiative defines diversity as a community of people of differing genders, racial-ethnic backgrounds, languages, religious beliefs, sexual orientations, abilities and disabilities, national and geographical origins, socio-economic class, veteran status and political views.

Patrick, a senior studying journalism, said it is important students take classes that take them outside of their comfort zones and force them to learn about cultures not necessarily their own. She said these classes could have provided the perfect opportunity to engage in discussions about the incident on Friday, when cotton balls were scattered in front of the Black Culture Center.

"It's very easy to go through MU and not have to take those classes," Patrick said. "It's very easy to take classes without having these discussions."

**Lots of hurdles**

This spring, the Faculty Council task force could recommend to the full council how to fit the diversity requirement into current curriculum. After this, the Faculty Council would discuss the proposal with colleges and schools on campus to determine how much of a burden the changes will put on their current curriculum.

Although the diversity requirement is a positive thing, Rubin said, the council does not want to hurt any college. Potential problems need to be examined, she said.
For example, if enrollment in a small culture class shoots up because the class suddenly meets a diversity requirement, the school might have to hire or train more teachers, or a tight-knit discussion environment might be sacrificed for a lecture hall environment.

Rubin said that the Faculty Council will not rush into a decision but that if the recommendation is approved, changes could occur as early as next fall. A collaboration among teachers, curriculum chairs and the vice provost of undergraduate studies would determine how to incorporate diversity learning objectives into their classrooms, Rubin said.

**MU has partial requirement**

Of the 39 public institutions in the Association of American Universities, 27 have some kind of diversity requirement, according to the group's Web site. MU falls under the partial requirement category. Some colleges, such as the College of Education, have a multicultural requirement, but others don't.

A Multicultural Certificate, offered by the College of Arts and Sciences, is a program similar to the requirement proposed by the campus climate task force; it allows students to receive a certificate in diverse and multicultural issues by taking classes. More than 400 classes count toward the certificate, Worthington said.

An MU campus climate study conducted in spring 2009 by the Chancellor's Diversity Initiative indicated that the campus would support diversity course requirement, Worthington said.

Although plans for a diversity course requirement will likely move forward, Patrick said she is frustrated with the amount of time it has taken for this issue to gain momentum.

Rubin speculated that turnover in Faculty Council leaders has slowed down the progress of the diversity course requirement. The council also wanted to wait and incorporate the issue into the general requirement review because it can affect all undergraduate curriculum.

Worthington said he thought the frustrations expressed by students at administrators at the Monday meeting were positive contributions.

"The emotions people were expressing last night were important because it was a step forward in managing what has happened to us, in an act that I have described as hostile to the MU community," Worthington said. The comments were necessary for people to hear, he said, so that the issue can move forward.
‘Privileged’ blamed for college barriers

Panel speakers target Missouri.

By Janese Heavin

Tuesday, March 2, 2010

An associate commissioner for the Missouri Department of Higher Education didn’t mince words this morning as he pointed fingers at college officials and K-12 representatives for being part of the systematic barriers that stand between low-income and minority students and a college education.

Among the steepest obstacles to higher education “are the minds of the privileged and powerful in this country who do not believe in social or economic equity,” Tim Gallimore said. “You in the room are part of the structural problem.”

Gallimore was a participant in a panel discussion that launched an all-day Focus on Missouri conference at the University of Missouri. The conference brought together more than 200 higher-education administrators from across the country.

Even though this was the first conference about access to college held at MU, Gallimore said he has attended similar programs at the national level. They make him angry, he said, because none has included speakers who actually overcame financial and social barriers to succeed in college.

A black man who holds a doctorate and is from a low-income family, Gallimore said he fits the bill but said the only reason he was invited to speak was because of his state position.

“We round up the usual suspects to preach to the choir about stuff they know nothing about,” he said.

Gallimore and fellow panelists agreed that financial barriers are significant obstacles to higher education.

Not only are families turned off by the initial sticker shock of tuition, panelist Nicole Hurd said, but some families need their older children to bring home a paycheck instead of attending school. Other families are fearful of filling out income information on federal loan applications, said Hurd, executive director of the National College Advising Corps, adding that one parent suggested she prefers to charge tuition on a credit card.

There’s cultural context in what makes those families skeptical, Gallimore said: “You live in a culture and society where no one will loan you money, and all of a sudden the man shows up and wants to offer you $20,000.”

Plus, Gallimore said, young people know college degrees don’t necessarily equal high-paying jobs. “They know college graduates make less than technicians and thugs,” he said.
When young people already are making money illegally, college is even less attractive, he said. Essentially, college recruiters are asking them "to exchange a quick dollar that can take care of present needs for the hope of a respectful job in the far-away future."

This morning's opening session provided few concrete solutions to overcoming barriers to college. Focus on Missouri conference participants were expected to hash out more tangible ideas in later break-out sessions.

Reach Janese Heavin at 573-815-1705 or e-mail jheavin@columbiatribune.com.
It helps to have a guide on the path to college

By MARÁ ROSE WILLIAMS

College guide Camry Ivory, right, has been counseling Paseo Academy of the Performing Arts student Robert Brown and others on how to apply to college. Ivory recently graduated from the University of Missouri.

The University of Missouri sent Camry Ivory, a 2008 graduate, back to high school with directions for helping seniors map their college futures.

At the Paseo Academy for the Performing Arts in Kansas City, where Ivory works, the 24-year-old from Overland Park met Robert Brown, a bright senior from a single-parent home in Kansas City.

"I think he knew he wanted to go to college but he didn’t know how to go through the steps that would get him there," Ivory said.

Brown, she said, is a talented writer and wants to study creative writing and theater at Columbia College in Chicago. Ivory helped him prepare for his ACT exam, apply to the school, fill out his federal financial aid forms, and has edited several of his scholarship essays.

“If I were on the admissions board at Columbia, I would give Robert a full ride,” Ivory said.

Ivory is a member of the Missouri College Advising Corps, an MU program reaching out across the state to prospective college students, then advising them on — and encouraging them through — the college admissions process.

Ivory is one of three MU graduates in the program who are working with scores of students at Kansas City high schools — Paseo, Van Horn, and Northeast Law and Public Service Magnet school.

Ivory and her fellow college graduates work a full day, five days a week in the high schools steering smart students from low-income households and minority populations toward more learning after high school.

“This is not about recruiting for the University of Missouri,” said Christian Basi, an MU spokesman. “This is about increasing the diversity in higher education in Missouri. The idea is to
help students find their best fit. It could be a two-year, or a four-year or technical school but it would be college,” Basi said. “We are trying to help the state with a better educated work force.”

Fewer than 40 percent of Missouri’s residents 25 to 34 have college degrees, said Robert Stein, the state’s commissioner of higher education.

The graduate advisers are about two years out of college, so they’re close in age to the high school students they work with.

For the high school students, it’s like having a big brother or sister to talk to about how to apply to college.

“Many of my students really haven’t thought about college as an attainable goal for themselves, either because they think they could never afford it or maybe they are the first person in their family to even graduate from high school and they don’t even know how to get started,” Ivory said.

“Ms. Ivory does a wonderful job.” said Paseo Principal Juanita Hempstead. “She’s young and looks just like a student herself. She is able to relate to them. I’m begging the state to continue this program for next year. These students need all the support they can get.”

In schools across the country, a lot of high school students hardly know their guidance counselor and get little help in plotting their pursuit of college.

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, the national student-to-guidance counselor ratio is 488 to 1. As a result, the average student spends only about 20 minutes per year talking to his or her school counselor.

For students who would be the first in their family to go to college, not having someone to guide them through the process — preparing to take ACT, applying for scholarships and financial aid — often means they won’t go to college, even if they are among the brightest in their class. According to the College Board, nearly a quarter of low-income students who score in the top quartile on standardized tests never go to college, and many of the remaining 75 percent never attain bachelor’s degrees.

Brown said that if it hadn’t been for Ivory, “I think I would still be college-bound, but I might not have found the right school, one I’m going to love,” he said. “She helped me solidify the dreams that I already had about going to college.”
Missouri's budget hole deepens

By Trevor Eischen, Ben Wieder
March 3, 2010 | 12:01 a.m. CST

JEFFERSON CITY – More cuts are coming.

Gov. Jay Nixon began meeting with legislative leaders Tuesday to discuss cutting nearly half a billion dollars from next year's budget, the same day his office announced a third straight month of double-digit declines in Missouri's revenue that will likely result in additional cuts in the current year.

House Budget Committee Chairman Allen Icet, R-Wildwood, and committee member Rep. Chris Kelly, D-Columbia, emerged from separate meetings with the governor, saying that $400 million to $500 million would have to be cut from the governor's spending plans for the 2011 fiscal year.

A cut of that magnitude would be similar to the entire state funding for the University of Missouri System.

Icet predicted that the size of the cuts are such that it will "change the nature of state government."

Late Tuesday afternoon, Nixon's budget director announced that revenue declined nearly 15 percent in February compared to last year. This followed January numbers that came in more than 20 percent below the previous year. To date, total revenue for the fiscal year, which begins in July, is more than 13 percent off last year's mark.

In addition, $300 million of federal funds that Nixon included in next year's budget came into jeopardy last week when a U.S. Senate jobs bill did not include that funding. A previous jobs bill in the U.S. House of Representatives did include that money.

If the funds are approved, they would expire at the end of the 2011 fiscal year. But Budget Director Linda Luebbering said her office would consider replacing state money with the federal funds. They would put the $300 million in state money aside for the next year, when nearly a billion dollars in federal stabilization funds expires.
Luebbering said in January that another month of revenue decline would likely force Nixon and legislators to consider revising their Consensus Revenue Estimate, a projection of the state's income next year on which the budget is based.

Nixon announced Monday that he would begin meetings with legislators to revise this number.

"We will need to downsize the scope of state government, while protecting necessary services to the citizens of Missouri," Nixon said in a statement.

Icet and Senate Appropriations Chair Rob Mayer, R-Dexter, are responsible for making the final decision for their respective legislative chambers.

Mayer said Monday that he would like some time to look into Missouri's financial outlook before making a decision on whether to revise budget numbers for next year.

"It's just not something we jump into in a matter of a day or two and say we're going to eliminate this program or cut this program a certain amount," he said.

But Mayer acknowledged that the timetable for crafting the budget, which needs to be completed by the end of the session, could make more analysis difficult.

Icet has said previously that Nixon should introduce a new budget for next year, if the revenue estimate changes. On Monday, he said he might be willing to compromise, but that Nixon would have to be involved in the process.

In January, Nixon released his budget recommendations for next year. Now, the House and Senate tweak and pass a final version. But drastic revenue changes mean the legislature must make more cuts than usual.

"If the governor expects the House Republicans to do the heavy lifting all by themselves, the probability of that happening is not very high," he said.

A letter released late Monday night by Icet and other House Republican leaders called on Nixon to provide specific recommendations as to where cuts should occur.

"We have received no details from you or your directors with respect to the necessary cuts you are suggesting to fix the budget," the letter said.
After meetings with the governor on Tuesday, Senate Republicans said they didn't come away with many specifics.

"There were no concrete plans that came out of (the caucus) as to what we're going to do," said President Pro Tem Charlie Shields, R-St. Joseph.

Sen. Kurt Schaefer, R-Columbia, said Nixon is looking for areas of government to consolidate to meet budget projections.

He said Nixon mentioned possibly consolidating all state lab work in one agency and removing state holidays.

Schaefer, vice-chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, said small cuts such as these would only cut $10 million, and not be enough to address the budget issues.

"If this is the first step — dialogue — I think that's good," Schaefer said. "I certainly hope, though, that the governor doesn't think that coming and speaking to us and pointing out what we already know and then not offering solutions is going to be the end of it."
Proposed bill has private, public university students debating scholarship money

By Trevor Eischen
March 3, 2010 | 12:01 a.m. CST

JEFFERSON CITY — Students of higher education feuded over who should receive more scholarship money at a legislative committee meeting Tuesday.

Officials and students from public and private institutions testified before the House Higher Education Committee about a bill moving scholarship money from private college students to those that attend public universities.

The bill, sponsored by Rep. Gayle Kingery, R-Poplar Bluff, would make students at public and private schools receive equal Access Missouri scholarship money. Now, private school students can get more money than those who attend public schools.

"Our goal is to make this even and equitable across the board," Kingery said. "We do not begrudge our private institutions. However, especially in the economy today, we'd like to equalize these amounts."

Students in four-year and two-year public institutions now receive a maximum of $2,150 and $1,000 respectively. Students at private institutions can receive up to $4,600.

If the bill passes, the change would not be implemented until the 2014-15 school year. Under the proposal, students at four-year and two-year private and four-year public institutions would receive $2,850. Students attending two-year public institutions would receive $1,250.

**MU Chancellor Brady Deaton said while students in private institutions account for 29 percent of the program's participants, they receive nearly 52 percent of the program's funds.**

"I can think of no other program that awards students to go to a more expensive institution," Deaton said.
When it comes to providing funds for private institutions, Deaton said Missouri ranks fourth in the nation, but ranks 37th for public education.

Amanda Shelton — Senate Speaker for the Missouri Students Association — said the $700 increase in the public scholarship might seem small, but it would offset costs and allow students to focus more on their studies, instead of working extra jobs or hours to pay for education.

"This $700 is very real to us," Shelton said. "This $700 would have allowed me to quit a second job and take another class."

Higher Education Commissioner Robert Stein testified against the legislation on behalf of his department. It voted 5-1 against the bill in their recommendation to the Higher Education Committee.

"They believe more process and dialog should occur before changing the law," Stein said.

Marianne Inman, president of Central Methodist University, said students at public schools receive more money from the state in separate funding.

"That is well more than twice the amount for students at the private institutions," Inman said.

A large number of students showed up to protest the bill.

"I started realizing how ridiculous this bill is," Austin Sailors, a student at College of the Ozarks said. "I'm starting to think alumni at MU wrote this bill."

He also said implementing the bill later than now is a scheme to ensure that the opponents will graduate and move on.

"The whole waiting for four years is a ploy to shut us students up," Sailors said.

The Higher Education Committee will likely discuss the bill next week.
Missouri House panel to consider changes to Access scholarships

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
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JEFFERSON CITY — A Missouri House panel is set to consider a bill changing the allocation of Access Missouri scholarship money to students at public and private universities.

Access Missouri scholarships for students at private colleges are currently almost twice as large as those given to students at public universities.

The legislation would eliminate the difference and set the same maximum scholarship — $2,850 — for students at public and private institutions. The change would take effect starting in 2015.

The House Higher Education Committee planned to take up the bill Tuesday. A similar measure has been approved by a Senate committee.
THE TIMES OF INDIA

Exercise counters negative effects of weight regain

With the obesity rate rising among adults and children, researchers have found that exercising during weight regain can maintain metabolic health and disease risk.

In a study by University of Missouri researchers, individuals who didn't exercise during weight regain experienced significant deterioration in metabolic health, while those who exercised maintained improvements in almost all areas.

The MU study, led by Tom R Thomas, professor in the Department of Nutrition and Exercise Physiology in the College of Human Environmental Sciences, is the first to examine the role of exercise in countering the negative effects of weight regain on metabolic syndrome (MetS) and overall health status.

"Although many people are successful at losing weight through diet and exercise, the majority of them will relapse and regain the weight," Thomas said.

"The findings of this study indicate that regaining weight is very detrimental; however, exercise can counter those negative effects. The findings support the recommendation to continue exercising after weight loss, even if weight is regained."

In the study, overweight men and women with measured characteristics of MetS were given a diet and aerobic exercise plan that included supervised exercise five days a week, for 4-6 months, according to ScienceDaily.com.

After losing weight, participants underwent programmed weight regain and were separated into two groups, one that exercised and one that didn't. The non-exercise group experienced rapid deterioration in weight loss induced benefits to metabolic health. The exercise group maintained improvements in almost all measures, including LDL and HDL cholesterol, oxygen consumption (VO2max), blood pressure and glucose. Exercise didn't maintain blood cholesterol and abdominal fat loss.

"It's clear that the message to lose weight isn't working because so many people regain weight; a new message is to keep exercising and maintain your weight to reduce disease risk and improve
overall health," Thomas said.

"Don't worry so much about losing weight, but focus on exercising and maintaining your current weight."