Forsee to host college presidents’ parley on Access Missouri

By Janese Heavin

Tuesday, March 16, 2010

Ten presidents of public and private colleges are expected to meet this evening in Columbia to hash out the future of a needs-based state scholarship program.

The dinner event is being held at Providence Pointe, home of University of Missouri System President Gary Forsee. Robert Stein, Missouri’s commissioner of higher education, is expected to facilitate, said Kathy Love, a spokeswoman for Stein.

“The goal is to see if they can reach a compromise where Access Missouri scholarships might be divvied up more fairly,” Love said.

Access Missouri is a three-year-old state scholarship program that awards as much as $2,150 to a student who attends a public college and as much as $4,600 to a student who goes to a private college. Proponents of the existing set-up contend it’s fair because the dollar amounts work out to roughly equal percentages of tuition.

Others, including Forsee, have argued it doesn’t make sense to give students more money if they go to a private college. During his 2010 State of the University speech, Forsee said Missourians should be “shocked” that more dollars are going to private institutes.

Lawmakers this session have been considering a Senate bill that would equalize the scholarships to $2,850 for all students. Last week, Gov. Jay Nixon suggested eliminating scholarships to private school students altogether to offset budget shortfalls.

Marianne Inman, president of Central Methodist University in Fayette, has been among private school leaders who oppose equalizing the scholarships. She said it’s too early to say how Nixon’s threat might change the discussion. Inman plans to attend this evening’s meeting to discuss alternatives.

“I’m hopeful that we can come to some kind of common ground,” she said. “I’m hopeful everyone will come in a spirit of wanting what is best for students and for Missouri’s economy and society.”

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COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Forsee to hold discussions on financial aid distribution

By The Associated Press
March 16, 2010 | 5:48 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Public and private university presidents were gathering in Columbia on Tuesday amid contentious talk in Jefferson City about how best to distribute financial aid.

University of Missouri System President Gary Forsee planned to host nine counterparts, including Missouri State University President Mike Nietzel and three community college leaders.

State lawmakers are considering a proposal to change the Access Missouri scholarship program by equalizing the amounts students at public and private colleges receive.

Gov. Jay Nixon has called for ending the scholarships altogether for students at private colleges. Those students can now receive almost twice as much money as students at public universities.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

MAC Scholars show commitment by organizing conference

MU MENTION Pg. 3

By Doug Davis
March 16, 2010 | 5:36 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — When public education is the topic, talk often turns to the academic achievement gap between white and minority students. But a group of Columbia students is doing more than talking about the gap — they're figuring out how to cross it. On Saturday, they are holding a conference at Hickman High School to share that information with other minority students.

The group is known throughout the district as the MAC (Minority Achievement Committee) Scholars, except at Rock Bridge High School, where the students call themselves MAAC (Minority Ambassadors for Achievement Council) Scholars. The conference, "Failure Is Not An Option," is a district-wide event and was independently conceived and organized by the students in the group.

The goal of the conference is similar to that of the MAC program: to help minority students prepare for college. It's aimed at students and their parents. While the program helps students maintain a long-term focus on performance in school, the conference focuses on details students need to know about the college application process and for transitioning to college life.

The keynote speaker will be Manuel Scott, an original "Freedom Writer" — part of a class of so-called unteachable students whose lives were turned around by a caring teacher and whose story became a movie. Symone Thomas, district coordinator of MAC Scholars, said Scott was selected because of his message and ability to reach out to students.
"He's very humble and passionate," Thomas said. "He just has that 'it' factor when he speaks."

**Breaking the cycle**

Scott grew up in Los Angeles, where he struggled with obstacles that prevent many black, Hispanic and other minority students from reaching their potential. Scott said that getting past those obstacles was a matter of personal change and help from supportive people. Scott now works as a motivational speaker to show struggling students they can make the change like he did. He estimated that he has spoken to nearly 300,000 people at conferences over the past year.

His father was in prison, he said; his stepfather was addicted to crack, and his mother was not able to cope with the stress of that life. It was a life of pain, Scott said. "I blamed everyone for my problems — my mom, white people, society," he said. "It was pain that turned me around. I wanted better."

He said that experience helps him understand what minority students are going through. "Kids come to me saying, 'I've got no reason to live,'" he said.

"I don't like leaving my family to travel so much, but I feel a sense of responsibility to do something to help," Scott said.

Like the hurting kids he now talks to, Scott wanted a better life at that age but didn't know how to reach that goal. That changed when he met Martin Stokes, who worked at a youth center. Stokes helped him see the answer was a personal choice, Scott said. Stokes told him, "You can break this cycle."

"He told me I needed to go back to school. So, I went back to school," Scott said.

That decision cost Scott most of his friends, who thought he was "soft" for going to school, he said. They couldn't see what he wanted from life. Some of them died — the streets got them, he said.

Going back to school wasn't easy. Scott said he had missed about 60 to 90 days of school each year from fourth through ninth grades, and it was hard to overcome that educational deficit. "You just don't make up for lost time that quickly," he said. Thanks to his teacher, Erin Gruwell, Scott and his classmates finished high school, and most
made it to college, Scott said. Their story was the basis of the 2007 movie "Freedom Writers" with Hilary Swank.

**Doing it right**

The idea for the conference came after Columbia MAC Scholars went to a national Minority Student Achievement Network conference in Madison, Wis., two years ago, said Stephanie Barnette, a Rock Bridge senior who went on the trip.

Barnette said that the closer the Columbia conference gets, the more hectic her schedule has become. "We want to make sure it's done right, and to show we can do it," she said. She will attend University of Missouri-Kansas City this fall to major in pharmaceutical science.

Michael Tatum, a Hickman junior who has been an MAC Scholar since seventh grade, said he has been working on details for the conference's wrap-up. "It's an important conference for the self-growth of the students," Tatum said. He saw Scott this past fall at the 2009 MSAN national conference in Chicago and was among six students who helped select the keynote speaker for the Columbia conference.

Mahogany Thomas, a ninth-grader at West Junior High School, has been an MAC Scholar since sixth grade. She said her part of preparing for the conference was entering registration information, which will help make sure that attendees get to the right place at the right time.

**DeAngela Burns-Wallace, director of access initiatives in MU's division of enrollment management, will be the closing speaker. She came to MU in October 2009 from Stanford University and, before that, was a Foreign Service officer for the U.S. State Department.**

Burns-Wallace said she wants the MAC Scholars to know that MU is a partner for them. "My hope is that my comments will be a stamp of encouragement on their efforts," she said.

The conference is exciting because the students are not waiting for someone else to come fix the achievement gap — they realize they have a powerful role in closing that
gap, Burns-Wallace said. By hosting the event, she said, "They are challenging their peers to come and be a part of the conversation."

Christal Jackson and Terri Tatum, both parents of MAC Scholars, said the program has been beneficial to their children. Jackson, who is president of the MAC parents board, said it's challenged her daughter, a ninth-grader at Oakland Junior High School, to achieve in honors courses.

Terri Tatum said the program has helped her son Michael stay on-task with schoolwork by helping improve his study habits. When he sees other minority students who are motivated to go to college, it reinforces that idea for him, she said. Michael took part in the MAC summer program at MU, where students stay on campus for two weeks during the summer and live like college students, she said. That included doing their own laundry, she said.

Jackson said the activities the scholars participate in make the program fun. "The program makes it cool to be smart," she said.
MU student advances in YouTube international journalism contest

By Lindsay Ross
March 17, 2010 | 12:01 a.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Amanda McDaniel is an 18-year-old Christian Fellowship School senior and cheerleader with bone cancer. Alex Rozier is a 20-year-old MU broadcast student who was inspired by her story and shared it with the world.

Rozier is one of 10 semifinalists in an international video journalism competition for a three-minute video titled "The Story of Amanda McDaniel." He beat 138 others for the spot.

Project: Report, sponsored by YouTube and the Pulitzer Center, called for non-professional aspiring journalists to share stories that might otherwise go untold. After asking people he knew for story ideas, a co-worker at KOMU told Rozier about McDaniel.

Rozier said McDaniel seemed honored to be a part of his project. "One of the things she's told me is that if she can affect one life through her fight with cancer, then to her it's a mission accomplished. She wanted to continue to spread the message of hope."

McDaniel's mother, Denise McDaniel, said their family appreciated Rozier's kindness and patience while filming the video, which contained interviews with the mother and daughter, as well as scenes of Amanda McDaniel cheering at the Christian school state basketball tournament in Joplin.

"It was a little funny having a camera in her face, watching her cheer," Denise McDaniel said. "But being in an unusual situation, he made it very comfortable."

Stacey Woelfel, KOMU news director, advised Rozier during the production process and said he was pleased with the quality of the final product. "I'd say I wasn't totally surprised," he said. "He's a sharp guy that had a vision."
Woelfel said that though the MU broadcast program already has a solid reputation, this competition provides an opportunity for a different group of people to see one of its students work.

Rozier said that studying at MU has been beneficial, as he has access to high-tech equipment and experienced faculty that he doesn’t think the other semi-finalists have.

He received a notebook laptop and a video camera for making the top-10 cut. The semi-finalists must now create a five-minute video portraying an issue that they feel is undercovered in the national media. Rozier has until April 4 to plan, shoot and edit his video.

Five winners will receive a $10,000 travel fellowship to go anywhere to create a similar video in collaboration with the Pulitzer Center. They will also be invited to Washington D.C. for a public screening of the videos and a private workshop with international journalists.

Both Rozier and Woelfel said that after viewing the quality of the other semi-finalists’ videos, they think Rozier has a good chance of winning.

For the second round, Rozier is required to seek input from his community regarding what issue they’d like to see his video focus on. He encourages Columbia residents to contact him by e-mail, alexmrozier@gmail.com, or through his Facebook page to make suggestions.

Rozier said that inspiring feature stories such as McDaniel’s are a nice counter to all the negative news that is broadcast daily. He hopes to be able to produce those types of pieces throughout his career.

“To see a girl like Amanda, whose health is not in good condition at all at 18-years-old, and she’s been fighting things that a lot people won’t fight in their entire life — it really put things in perspective for me,” he said.