Hiring deans costs more than a salary

MU’s incentives a buffet of deals.

By Janese Heavin

Sunday, March 28, 2010

Tough budget times can’t stand in the way of hiring the most qualified individuals to lead the University of Missouri’s schools and colleges, administrators say. The higher education market is competitive, and hiring choices must correspond with long-range goals, not just tightened belts, MU Chancellor Brady Deaton said.

University of Missouri administrators told the Tribune that neither contracts nor appointment letters exist for the following individuals: Deputy Chancellor Michael Middleton, Vice Chancellor Catherine Scroggs, Vice Chancellor Jacquelyn Jones, Asst. to the Chancellor Chris Koukola and Asst. Vice Chancellor Karen Touzeau.

“We compete with the best,” Provost Brian Foster said. “We compete for very good people who almost always have other options.”

MU’s commitment to staying competitive is reflected in the latest appointment of Daniel Clay as dean of the College of Education. Along with the usual allowances for relocation and moving expenses, the university agreed to give Clay an administrative stipend of $20,000 and to provide as much as $15,000 to bring in an outside review team to assess the college. That review likely would have been conducted regardless who became the dean.

A Tribune review of contracts shows MU has agreed to pay moving costs, provide relocation allowances and, in most cases, offer administrative stipends to deans during the past 20 years. For some, the university has sweetened the pot with extra funds for a specific college. A few examples:

- When Robert Churchill went from interim dean to dean of the School of Medicine last year, MU agreed to add $1 million to the budget and supply a one-time boost of $1.5 million and $250,000 over two fiscal years.
- Neil Olson, dean of the College of Veterinary Medicine since 2007, is receiving $125,000 for the three fiscal years starting in 2008 as "seed" money to support the teaching hospital. In addition, the university agreed to change the incentive arrangement from the Research Animal Diagnostic Laboratory from a 50-50 split to a phased-in arrangement that resulted in the college receiving 75 percent this year.
Steve Jorgensen, named dean of the College of Human Environmental Sciences in 2001, received $50,000 in one-time monies over two years for program changes.

Those allocations have aligned with strategic plans and goals for specific colleges, Deaton said.

Although specifics might be attached to letters of appointment, he added, some of those financial incentives paid to colleges were made before someone was named dean, meaning the appropriations would not have been outlined in appointment letters.

Foster said such allocations were “not just there to attract a dean, they’re strategic decisions.”

Perhaps the most visible case of a strategic plan landing in an appointment letter involved the College of Engineering. When James Thompson took over as engineering dean, he was charged with transforming the school by increasing research and boosting enrollment. In 1994, MU agreed to add 17 faculty positions, giving him what were then state fees charged to engineering courses and a one-time allocation to the college of $200,000.

Thompson has increased research spending, which comes from outside grant sources, from less than $4 million to $15.6 million this year and has increased enrollment by roughly 500 undergraduates over the past decade.

In exchange for an increase in research, Thompson’s contract says the university will return to the college a greater proportion of indirect research dollars. Indirect research funds are a portion of grant dollars that go into MU’s general operating budget in lieu of providing facilities and other indirect support. Right now, MU returns 25 percent of those dollars to departments that receive the grant. The College of Engineering, however, gets 50 percent.

A review of MU administrative contracts also shows that the university created a position for the spouse of Rob Duncan, who was named vice chancellor for research in 2008. After he was hired, his wife, Annette Sobel, was tapped to be assistant to the provost for strategic opportunities.

Deaton said administrators had already identified a need for that position.

Sobel brought with her a military background with medical and engineering training but also ties to various agencies that benefit MU, Foster added.

Spousal accommodations aren’t uncommon in higher education markets. Although MU doesn’t always find on-campus spots for the husband or wife of coveted hires, doing so boosts recruiting efforts and helps the university retain qualified staff, Foster said.

Two deanships remain open at MU at the Trulaske College of Business and at the graduate school, which Foster expects to be filled soon. He doesn’t foresee difficulty filling the business school slot.

Reach Janese Heavin at 573-815-1705 or e-mail jheavin@columbiatribune.com.
The University of Missouri-Columbia said Friday that it had leased roughly 7,000 square feet in a Blue Springs office building, establishing a beachhead as part of its expected participation in a proposed science-and-technology park.

University spokesman Christian Basi said the three-year lease at the Heartland Building, 1600 N.E. Coronado Drive, begins April 1. The cost is $15 a square foot, he said.

The university expects to house a number of programs in the facility, all of which are expected to be up and running by the end of April, Basi said.

As announced in December 2008, MU was expected to be the anchor tenant in the Missouri Innovation Park in Blue Springs. Initial plans called for MU to occupy a roughly 32,000-square-foot building in the roughly 500-acre park.

Blue Springs officials said in February that the university was scaling back its initial participation because of expected cuts in state financing. The university said then that it was looking to lease space in Blue Springs.

According to a news release, the programs initially scheduled to go into the Blue Springs office space are:

- MU School of Information Science and Learning Technologies. This office will provide website usability testing services for clients such as businesses and government agencies. It also will provide faculty assistance in designing training programs and information services.

- MU Office of Research, which focuses on technology transfer and building partnerships with engineering and biomedical corporations.

- MU DIRECT/Distance Learning. The office serves about 900 Kansas City-area students who take six hours of credit a semester. The new space will allow MU DIRECT to expand its distance
learning, professional development and information technology programs in the Kansas City area.

- MU Extension Food and Nutrition programs. MU faculty and staff manage the largest nutrition education program in the state. With the new space, four full-time nutrition staff members would help cover the education effort in eastern Jackson County.

- MU Career Services. Through the MU Academic Support Center, MU administrators hope to increase the possibilities for internships and post-graduation employment placement for students.

- MU College of Veterinary Medicine. The college will use its space to develop and extend research partnerships within the KC Animal Health Corridor, which runs from Columbia, Mo., to Manhattan, Kan.

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MU leases space at developing technology park in Blue Springs

By Janese Heavin

Saturday, March 27, 2010

University of Missouri administrators yesterday announced that they have signed a lease agreement to occupy space in the Heartland Building in Blue Springs. The agreement enables MU to promote scientific collaboration in the region as the Missouri Innovation Park continues to develop.

The agreement allows Mizzou to “bring unique outreach programs to the Kansas City region on an accelerated timetable,” MU Chancellor Brady Deaton said in a prepared statement.

According to the city of Blue Springs, the innovation park, a partnership with the Blue Springs Economic Development Corporation, is a technology park of more than 500 acres that are intended to provide a cluster for innovation and commercialization in western Missouri. MU has been on board with that plan since its inception in hopes of enhancing the university’s statewide mission and teaming up with commercial businesses and private industries in the Kansas City area.

Having an early presence in the park will allow MU to forge relationships with new tenants as development occurs, Deaton said.

Some of the initial MU programs that will be housed in the space include:

- School of Information Science and Learning Technologies, an office that will provide Web site usability testing services for businesses, government agencies and organizations that want a Web presence.
- An Office of Research, which would provide space for corporate engineering and biomedical partners, as well as technology transfers.
- MU DIRECT/Distance Learning, an office aimed at allowing the distance education program to increase enrollment and expand programs in the Kansas City area.
- Extension Food and Nutrition, space for four full-time nutrition staff members who will help cover education efforts in eastern Jackson County.
- An MU Career Services office to increase the possibilities for internships and post-graduation employment placement for students.
- Space for the MU College of Veterinary Medicine to develop and extend research partnerships within the Animal Health Corridor, which runs from Columbia to Manhattan, Kan.

Reach Janese Heavin at 573-815-1705 or e-mail jheavin@columbiatribune.com.
Missouri Innovation Park plans continue

By Katy Bergen
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COLUMBIA — MU has leased space in the Heartland Building in Blue Springs to secure an early location to help recruit firms for the Missouri Innovation Park.

The Blue Springs Economic Development Corporation is developing the Missouri Innovation Park, a place for research firm tenants, the corporation and MU to come together for scientific collaboration in what MU Provost Brian Foster called a "win-win" situation.

Foster said the Missouri Innovation Park could benefit students who could research, learn and establish working relationships with tenants in the park.

A starting date for park development depends on the tenants the corporation is recruiting, Foster said. He said the corporation is in a high-level planning stage and consulting with firms to plan and layout the park.

The park will be funded through "complex" forms of funding, Foster said, that may include:

* grants from the local, state and federal level
* government agencies
* economic developers
* tax credits
* monetary gifts

The Heartland Building is located adjacent to Interstate 70 on Northeast Coronado Drive in Blue Springs.
Day care policies vex mom

MU facility picks kids on race, gender basis.

By Janese Heavin

Friday, March 26, 2010

A Columbia mom thought she was being proactive when she put her yet-to-be-born child on the University of Missouri's Child Development Lab's waiting list three months into pregnancy.

That was nearly a year ago, and Lisa Dodds' baby has yet to get a spot. Why?

"It's reverse discrimination," said Dodds, the mother of a white male infant.

It's true the on-campus program wants to fill its limited spots with children from a variety of backgrounds, Director Jessie Bradley said. But that's because the center serves as a teaching tool for students, she said.

"The reason why we do this is because this is a laboratory and not just a child-care facility," Bradley said. "We have 35 students taking a lab course and interacting with children and families. We set up an environment where they have access to different situations and learn how to work with families from different backgrounds."

The MU Child Development Lab enrolls 95 children, from 6 weeks old to third grade. When a slot for a specific age becomes open, Bradley said administrators will review the waiting list to see which children of that age would best diversify the class. In addition to gender and race, the lab also looks for children from nontraditional family structures, such as same-sex partner households and grandparents raising children, she said. Siblings of children already enrolled have priority.

Even with efforts to diversify, the majority of children enrolled are white, Bradley said.

Dodds said she became familiar with the enrollment practices after her son was born. That's when she learned an acquaintance of Indian descent had secured a spot for his daughter at the lab despite the fact that Dodds' son had been on the waiting list longer. And even though her acquaintance turned down the spot, creating an opening, Dodds was told she still could not enroll her son.
She’s hoping for a spot to open in June but is not convinced her son will be selected. Still, she said she wants the policy reviewed for future families.

“It’s clearly unfair,” Dodds said.

Local legal experts said they would need more specific details to determine the legality of such a policy, but at first glance, Dan Viets of the American Civil Liberties Union said the policy surprised him.

“At minimum I would think this would be illegal because it’s publicly funded, but I’m not even sure privately funded preschools” could set such policies, he said.

Steve Wyse, who handles civil rights cases, said governmental agencies can get away with racially based policies if there’s a compelling reason. If the reason in this case is to meet the educational needs of college students, he said, “this would probably pass muster.”

Cande Iveson, who works in MU’s Office of Social Work, is a former advocate and lobbyist for early child-care issues and is familiar with the lab’s policy.

“It’s a long-standing policy that has been a benefit to a number of families, even if that benefit is not obvious to this particular family,” she said. Those benefits, she said, include “the education of minority children and diversity in the classroom experience both for other children and for students of education.”

Plus, Iveson added: “This is the kind of experience minority families frequently have.”

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