Tuition freeze on table amid budget talks

More higher ed cuts could undo bargain.

By Janese Heavin

The University of Missouri Board of Curators will meet on the Rolla campus next week to discuss, in part, tuition rates for the upcoming school year.

Until then, it is too early to say whether curators will vote to keep tuition rates flat while in the state legislature budget scenarios change daily.

"There's no way to sit here today and predict what's going to happen," UM spokeswoman Jennifer Hollingshead said. "Trying to go through a whole bunch of scenarios is disingenuous at this point. Curators are going to have to make that call."

University administrators and Gov. Jay Nixon continue to support a plan that would freeze in-state undergraduate tuition for the 2010-11 school year in exchange for no more than a 5 percent, or $50 million, cut in state funding to higher education.

Although the House stuck to that plan in its version of the budget, the Senate Appropriations Committee earlier this week recommended cutting an additional $15 million for higher education, which ultimately would negate the tuition deal. The two legislative bodies must negotiate a final budget by May 7.

Curators typically approve tuition for the school year — which spans summer, fall and spring semesters — each April.

MU spokeswoman Mary Jo Banken said the school will recommend that curators freeze tuition at least for the summer semester, which begins June 7. Then, she said, if state lawmakers don't uphold Nixon's end of the bargain, the board could reconvene to make any necessary adjustments.

"Our current planning assumes that the governor's deal will be in effect," she said. "However, if the legislature should pass a different budget and cut our budget more, we may have to reconsider raising tuition for fall."

The Board of Curators can only increase tuition by the consumer price index of 2.8 percent without special permission to go above that from the state's Department of Higher Education and coordinating board — according to a provision in a Senate bill approved three years ago.
Hollingshead said administrators are optimistic the agreement between Nixon and public universities will remain intact.

“The University of Missouri believes we’ve strongly made a case to the legislature for recognizing our funding needs,” she said. “We certainly have upheld our end of the bargain to be accountable and accessible, and we certainly think we’ve shown our value across the state.”

Reach Janese Heavin at 573-815-1705 or e-mail jheavin@columbiatribune.com.
Schaefer irked by Nixon stance on cuts

By Terry Ganev

Wednesday, April 7, 2010


The Columbia Republican is vice chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, which for the past week has been whittling away at Nixon’s spending plan. The plan is about $500 million out of balance, and the committee has cut nearly $15 million more from the state higher-education budget and continues to slice away services for people who need psychiatric services and substance abuse treatment.

But Schaefer said Nixon has not been open and transparent about what he wants the committee to trim.

“We are down there in open hearing, deciding on what to fund or not,” Schaefer said. “The governor should be transparent about what he wants to do. He should not be straddling the fence, but he should be leading in public about what he wants done.”

Linda Luebbering, Nixon’s budget director, has released a list of “potential reductions” for the Senate committee to consider. But in an appearance yesterday afternoon in Columbia, Nixon himself said “that wasn’t a list of recommended cuts.”

Nevertheless, Nixon insisted he was cooperating with Sen. Rob Mayer, R-Dexter and chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee. “We have been constantly, daily working with Sen. Mayer and others to provide them ideas and counsel and have been present and working throughout this entire process,” he said.

Asked for three specific, big-number items he would recommend, the governor said:

- Keep funding for K-12 schools at the 2010 levels.
- Equalize need-based scholarship payments to students of private and public schools.
- Reduce the number of tax credits, which cost the state $448 million in 2009.

Nixon targeted the low-income housing tax credit and wondered whether it was necessary to build rent-capped apartment units that cost the state $350,000 each.
“We can’t, in a world where we are forced because of budget challenges to make the kind of cuts we are having to talk about here and to take off the table things like historic tax credits,” Nixon said. “It’s $180 million a year.”

Nixon said he would continue to push for an agreement between the state and higher-education institutions in which public universities would freeze tuition in return for a $50 million cut in state funding. The Senate committee increased the size of the reduction to $65 million, but Nixon said that wasn’t the last word on the matter.

“We ought to honor that agreement,” Nixon said. “It’s still in process.”

Nixon also said he supported ideas that changed the retirement systems for future state workers so that they contribute to their own retirement program. Those now enrolled in the Missouri State Employees Retirement System do not contribute to their own pensions.

Before the legislature adjourns May 14, the governor said, he hopes it will approve meaningful ethics reform, a strengthening of laws against those accused of driving while intoxicated, and a requirement that insurance companies cover treatment for autism.

Reach Terry Ganey at 573-815-1708 or e-mail tganey@columbiatribune.com.
Missouri Senate panel cuts $500 million from proposed budget

JEFFERSON CITY — A Senate committee declared Thursday that it has sliced more than $500 million from Missouri's proposed budget for next year — meeting a target set by Gov. Jay Nixon to bring it in balance.

The Senate Appropriations Committee wrapped up its work after making hundreds of individual spending cuts, ranging from just a few dollars for some programs to tens of millions for others. Among the biggest and most contentious cuts Thursday was the elimination of a $37 million program that pays teachers extra money for after-school tutoring.

"We're in a horrendous economic time, and we're having to do things we normally would not support and would not want to do," said committee chairman Sen. Rob Mayer, R-Dexter.

The governor had proposed a $23.86 billion operating budget in January for Missouri's 2011 fiscal year, which begins July 1. But he said last month that his plan needed to be trimmed by about $500 million because of declining state tax revenues and uncertain federal funding.

Senate committee staff said Thursday that the panel had cut $506 million of general revenue expenses. Nixon's administration backed many of those cuts.

"Gov. Nixon appreciates the Senate rolling up their sleeves and making some real progress on the budget," said gubernatorial spokesman Jack Cardetti.
But Nixon hopes to reverse one cut in particular. The Senate reduced higher education funding by more than 7 percent — jeopardizing a deal brokered by Nixon in which colleges and universities agreed to freeze tuition so long as they weren’t cut by more than about 5 percent.

The budget is to go before the full Senate next week. It must then be reconciled with a version already approved by the House that is about $200 million smaller than Nixon’s plan. Lawmakers must pass a final version by May 7.

Through two weeks of hearings, the 11 members of the Senate Appropriations Committee frequently expressed angst over cuts they were making. That was especially true for the elimination of the Career Ladder program, which was established in 1985. The program pays teachers between $1,500 and $5,000 annually for performing extra duties, such as tutoring and developing curriculum.

Last year, 17,958 of the state’s 70,689 public school teachers received extra pay from the program, according to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Teachers in two-thirds of Missouri’s 523 school districts participated.

The elimination of Career Ladder funding could force public schools to either dip into their own funds or shortchange teachers for the extra hours of work they have done during the current school year.

"I think the local districts will grapple with that," said Brent Ghan, a spokesman for the Missouri School Boards’ Association. "Some will probably see if they can come up with some additional funding to offset the state cut, others will probably come to the conclusion they can’t afford to do that."

The House previously voted to fund the program. So lawmakers ultimately could provide anywhere from no money to the full $37 million when negotiators craft a final budget.

Career Ladder payments are a reimbursement for work already completed. For example, teachers performing extra duties during the 2009-2010 school year normally would receive their state payment this coming July, which is the first month of Missouri’s 2011 budget year.
Senators Frank Barnitz, D-Lake Spring, and Kurt Schaefer, R-Columbia, argued that Missouri essentially would be reneging on a contract by eliminating the $37 million payment. They noted that many school districts — like the state — are facing their own budget problems.

The chairmen of the House and Senate budget committees warned education officials last summer that there was no guarantee the Career Ladder program would be funded in the next budget.

Mayer said school administrators had plenty of notice. But Barnitz said many districts already had reached contracts with teachers to perform extra duties by the time they received that notice.

Both the Senate and House versions of the budget would keep basic school aid flat for the 2010-2011 academic year, rejecting a more than $100 million increase called for under the formula that calculates how much each district is due.

The Senate plan would cut deeper into school busing aid and the Parents as Teachers early childhood development program. It also eliminates funding for the Scholars and Fine Arts academies, a pair of three-week summer programs for gifted high school students.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

UM System president comments on Senate budget action

By Gary Forsee
April 8, 2010 | 4:42 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — A legislative plan for the state budget would cut higher education funding next year by roughly 5 percent, which would translate to about $50 million. On Tuesday, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved a further cut of $15 million beyond the originally agreed upon reduction.

Gary Forsee, president of the University of Missouri System, issued this statement on Tuesday afternoon about recent Senate action:

"In response to numerous inquiries, I want to express my continued appreciation to the governor and the General Assembly for their work and diligence on the 2011 state budget. This is a very hard and complicated challenge.

"We do believe there is consistent and growing recognition of the value that higher education plays in our state's future. The University of Missouri has taken extraordinary steps to ensure its accountability to the state during this time, including continuing to take very tough actions to meet our own budget challenges. But at the same time, we are making investments in our most important constituents, our students. We have held undergraduate tuition flat in 2010 by working proactively with the governor and General Assembly and have pursued that same tact for 2011 while accepting a prescribed cut to our core budget.

"As the budget process has worked its way through the House and Senate in the past couple of weeks, we have been very engaged in representing our value and accountability. The governor also has expressed his continued support for the proposition that was reached last fall on funding and tuition. While there are currently differences in the House and Senate versions of higher education funding, the University of Missouri will continue to be proactive as the General Assembly draws to
conclusion its budget process. We believe we have strongly made the case for recognizing our funding needs juxtaposed with the need to provide Missourians access to public higher education.”
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

George Justice named as MU Graduate School dean

By Katelyn Amen
April 8, 2010 | 3:22 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — MU’s new Graduate School dean, George Justice, doesn’t officially start the job until May 1. But Justice, with more than nine months as interim dean, is pretty much settled in.

MU announced Thursday that Justice is the new dean of the Graduate School and vice provost for advanced studies.

"It feels more permanent," he said. "I feel validated by the provost and the rest of campus in the work that I’ve been doing."

Justice, 45, said he hopes to bring people together and focus a collective energy on moving forward as graduate dean. The Graduate School has 6,028 students in 96 master’s degree programs, 71 doctoral program and six educational specialist degree programs.

"I want us to be able to harness the best skills across campus to foster innovative programs and the best student support," he said.

He said he’ll focus on recruiting a diverse student body and working with the education coordinator for the Mizzou Advantage, a list of assets identifying MU’s unique strengths. He said this will allow the school to provide graduate certificates that are innovative, useful to students and academically rigorous.

"We have to figure out what programs students want and how we are able to have the capacity and ability to provide those programs at a very high level," he said.

He said the programs must also recalibrate what graduate education means in a changing world.
Justice has been an MU faculty member since 2002. He served as director of graduate studies for the department of English and assistant and associate dean of the Graduate School. His annual salary for the new position is $145,000.

MU Provost Brian Foster said in a news release that he's been impressed with Justice's positive vision for the Graduate School and his interest in creating campus-wide discussion on the national issues in graduate education.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Missouri introduces Pingeton as new women's basketball coach

By Vinnie Duber
April 8, 2010 | 2:55 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Standing in front of a crowd with a microphone in front of her must have evoked some stand-up comedy memories for Robin Pingeton.

The newly-introduced Missouri women's basketball coach got a laugh out of everyone in attendance during her first day on the job.

"In regards to my contract," Pingeton told the crowd in the Clinton Club at Mizzou Arena Thursday morning, "they just told me 'sign here, it's a 20-year contract, and you're good to go.'"
All laughs aside, Pingeton has a tough job ahead of her. She has the task of turning around a Missouri program that has experienced a losing record in Big 12 Conference play in six of the past seven seasons and hasn’t been to an NCAA Tournament since 2006.

Pingeton has spent the past seven years as the head coach at Illinois State University where she finished with a record of 144-81 including two trips to the NCAA Tournament. Under Pingeton, the Redbirds have won three straight Missouri Valley Conference regular season championships.

Her contract has not been finalized, but, according to MU Athletic Director Mike Alden, it will be a five-year deal with a total package worth about $600,000.

Alden said Pingeton was at the top of Missouri’s list. He said Missouri formally interviewed two other candidates besides Pingeton, but he made it clear that she was the No. 1-choice for the job.

“I’ve known about Robin Pingeton for a long time,” Alden said. “As we watched her develop that (Illinois State program), we saw a lot of similarities between what some of our needs were here at Mizzou. There was no question she was right at the top of the list for a long time. Not just the last couple of weeks.”

Pingeton will bring her coaching staff with her from Illinois State, and she said she wants to play with an up-tempo style.

Alden discussed recruiting in his introduction of Pingeton. He said he wants the new coach to “lock down the borders” of Missouri as well as recruit from neighboring states, including the Chicago area, and Texas.

Another challenge for Pingeton will be to increase the attendance at Missouri games. Alden confirmed that there are attendance-related incentives in Pingeton’s contract.

“Attendance is a big part of it,” Pingeton said. “A fan base doesn’t grow overnight. I think fans want to come support a winning program and watch something that’s exciting to watch.”
Pingeton met with current Missouri players Wednesday night. She called the meeting "special." While Pingeton mentioned she is still working on the names and faces of her new players, junior guard RaeShara Brown said she was impressed with her new coach.

"I felt like her vibe was very good," Brown said. "She did a great job of coming in and just embracing us. I didn't feel like it was an awkward moment from the time she walked in to the time she left. I think the team was very excited. The atmosphere was very good. She broke down her goals and values and what she expected from us, not only as basketball players but as young women."

Pingeton is no stranger to the Big 12 or Columbia. She was an assistant coach under Bill Fennelly at Iowa State from 2000-2003, and her aunt and uncle have lived in Columbia for 49 years. She praised the Big 12 Conference as the best in the country, calling it a "monster of the conference."
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

MU students rally for legalized marijuana

By Jordin Ruthstein
April 8, 2010 | 7:34 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — In recognition of National Alcohol Awareness Month, college students across the nation are proposing a question: Why not marijuana instead?

The Safer Alternative For Enjoyable Recreation's Nationwide Day of Action on April 1 had students asking universities to stop "driving them to drink and allow them to use marijuana as a safer recreational alternative," according to a news release from the organization.

Because MU's spring break fell on April 1, students at MU participated Thursday. Students at San Diego State, Kent State, San Francisco State and Brown universities did the same.

"Student response has been magnificent," said Mason Tvert, executive director for the organization. "We have seen students in 34 states taking action on their campuses."

Around the country, students distributed information comparing the harmful effects of alcohol and marijuana and held signs arguing for the Emerald Initiative, a response to the Amethyst Initiative, which encourages open discussion on lowering the drinking age to 18.

The Emerald Initiative calls for "informed and dispassionate public debate' on whether allowing students to use marijuana more freely could reduce dangerous drinking on and around college campuses," according to the news release.

Students across the country visited university presidents with copies of the organization's Emerald Initiative, urging their presidents' endorsements. They also delivered copies of the book "Marijuana Is Safer: So Why Are We Driving People to Drink?"
Tvert said presidents of many universities had not heard of the Emerald Initiative before the Day of Action, and he hopes "it will be the beginning of a longer discussion."

MU students participated by rallying in Speakers Circle, drawing raucous support from fellow students. As they continued their rally during a march to the office of MU Chancellor Brady Deaton, one supporter yelled: "Smoke weed every day."

Scott Lauher, member of the MU chapters of NORML and Students for Sensible Drug Policy, helped organize the rally.

"Right now they push students to party with alcohol instead of marijuana," Lauher said.

Kellie Smith, president of NORML at MU, spoke to the crowd at Speakers Circle, arguing that punishment for marijuana use should be no greater than that for underage drinking. It's time students learned to party responsibly, she said.

Lauher agreed. "We'd like (marijuana punishments) to be equalized with alcohol," he said.

"Every objective study on marijuana has concluded that it is far less harmful than alcohol, both to the user and to society, yet students face more severe legal and university penalties for marijuana use than they do for alcohol use," according to the organization's Campuses Initiative Web site.

So far, Tvert is pleased with the outcome of the Day of Action.

"We've generated news coverage and discussion nationwide."
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

MU Faculty Council reviews intellectual property regulations

By Nicole Lebsack
April 8, 2010 | 8:35 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Ownership of intellectual property created by college faculty members can be a sticky issue, and the MU Faculty Council discussed possible changes to such rules at their Thursday meeting.

The university now owns the copyright in the following categories:

- Works that are commissioned for university use by the university
- Works that are created by employees if the production of the materials is a specific responsibility of the position for which the employee is hired
- Sponsored works, or works resulting from grants (but not if the production of the copyrighted work is ancillary to the purpose of the grant)
- Works created with the use of substantial university resources

Chairwoman Leona Rubin said that under current rules, faculty can negotiate with department chairs for copyright ownership. Amended rules would leave some departmental control but would also add more levels of approval.

Rebecca Johnson of the nursing school questioned who would own the copyright of journal articles and other published works that are required of some faculty.

"How much of that work, just by the fact that I’m expected to publish, is the university’s property?" she asked.

The possible changes will be discussed further at the next Intercampus Faculty Council meeting and the May 4 MU Faculty Council meeting. The UM System Board of Curators would make any final decision.
Also at the meeting:

- Following the council’s March 4 vote of support for domestic partner benefits, Rubin said Chancellor Brady Deaton is looking into other ways to provide benefits for employees’ domestic partners. Deaton’s goal, according to Rubin, is to extend more “soft benefits” to domestic partners, which could include access to the MU Student Recreation Complex, Ellis Library and other activities on campus that currently restrict benefits to spouses.

- The MU Faculty Council readdressed UM’s proposed academic integrity statement. Council members again expressed concerns with the wording of the document, which will be addressed at the next Intercampus Faculty Council meeting.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Anne Deaton speaks at 'True Confessions of a High-Heeled Leader'

By Katelyn Amen
April 8, 2010 | 8:40 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — When she was growing up in Brooklyn, New York Anne Deaton organized all the kids on her street into a summer school that charged 10 cents a day. She named herself principal, and her friends were the teachers. Even then, Deaton knew she wanted to be a teacher.

Education, public policy and service have been at the forefront of Deaton's career, as she explained Thursday evening in a conversation at Stephens College for "True Confessions of a High-Heeled Leader." The event was put on by the Graduate and Continuing Studies program at Stephens, which features successful professional female leaders in the community.

Deaton, wife of MU Chancellor Brady Deaton, taught at MU and worked in state government before becoming MU's first lady. She holds adjunct faculty positions in the Sinclair School of Nursing, the College of Human Environmental Sciences and the College of Education.

"I think one of the toughest things for women is to be honest with themselves," she said. "Each individual really has to search for her own heart."

Deaton's own heart has led her to volunteerism. She has volunteered at a number of local community service organizations, including 4-H and Rotary Club of Columbia. She also serves on the Thompson Center for Autism and Neurological Studies Advisory Board and the American Association of University Women.

Stephens College President Dianne Lynch said Deaton's spirit "permeates the community."
Past speakers at "True Confessions" have included Lynda Baumgartner, owner of Image Technologies of Missouri, former Stephens College president Wendy Libby, former Columbia Public Schools superintendent Dr. Phyllis Chase and Commerce Bank president Teresa Maledy.

"I love coming to hear about professional women," Jefferson Junior High ninth-grader Maria Kalaitzandonakes said. "Teenagers should come and see these things."