Cuts loom over academy at MU

Gifted program still hanging on.

Instructor Ake Takahashi leads a Japanese language and culture class in June at the University of Missouri’s Middlebush Hall as part of last year’s Missouri Scholars Academy session. The scholars academy could see its remaining state funding eliminated because of budget cuts.

By Janese Heavin

Monday, April 12, 2010

A program for academically gifted students will go on this summer in spite of state funding cuts, but the future of the Missouri Scholars Academy is uncertain.
The Senate Appropriations Committee last week recommended eliminating funding for the University of Missouri-hosted academy, along with a sister arts academy, in the upcoming budget, which takes effect July 1. The allocation could come up in debate on the Senate floor this week. If it doesn’t, the cut will be final because the House budget, as well as Gov. Jay Nixon’s budget proposal, also slashes that funding.

State Sen. Kurt Schaefer, R-Columbia, attempted to salvage funding to the program by using some state dollars that now go to the Missouri School Boards’ Association to train new board members, as well as state money now going to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to track school district performance above and beyond federal requirements. The committee shot down that proposal.

“Needless to say, that was a proposal where I found the money in a very reasonable and realistic way from other programs that would not hurt those programs,” Schaefer said. “If we’re going to be cutting funding for education, money that goes to kids has to be priority, not money that goes to adults.”

The Missouri Scholars Academy, held on the MU campus, and the Fine Arts Academy, held in Springfield, are receiving a combined $259,000 from the state this year. That’s down from state support of $750,000 last year. By using money left over from the 2009 program and charging students a $500 activity fee, MU will be able to host 330 students at the academy this summer.

The scholars program challenges academically gifted high school students by giving them a college-like experience. Students select a major and minor, attend related courses and stay in residence halls.

Eliminating state funding to support that program would be a “terrible tragedy,” said Joe Barone of Columbia.

“Our son went to the scholars academy years ago, and it changed his life,” Barone said, noting that his son now holds a doctorate in chemical engineering. “One thing the scholars academy did for our son is let him know he wasn’t at the top of the heap. There were others who were smarter, and there was competition. It let him know he needed to work harder.”

Even if the state no longer funds the Missouri Scholars Academy, the university could continue the program in other ways, such as charging tuition. Ted Tarkow, associate dean of arts and sciences at MU, oversees the summer program and was not available this morning for comment. DESE spokesman Jim Morris said decisions about the future of the program have not been made.

“The economic climate is so tough, and it doesn’t look like it’s going to get better quickly,” he said. “The future of many of these programs being targeted for reduction or elimination is unknown.”

Reach Janese Heavin at 573-815-1705 or e-mail jheavin@columbiatribune.com.
Curators to discuss tuition rates

A $15 million budget cut could jeopardize the system's tuition freeze.

By Abbey Sussell

Published April 13, 2010

The UM system Board of Curators will meet Thursday and Friday at Missouri University of Science and Technology to discuss tuition rates for the coming school year among other subjects.

UM system spokeswoman Jennifer Hollingshead said it is only possible to speculate on decisions the board will make.

"It is likely that the board will discuss the tuition rates, but we cannot predict everything that will be discussed," Hollingshead said.

The Missouri Senate Appropriations Committee approved a budget that would cut an additional $15 million from higher education last week. If passed by the state legislature, the new budget would violate a tuition freeze agreement between Gov. Jay Nixon and four-year public universities.

Universities froze in-state, undergraduate tuition rates as part of the agreement in exchange for the state cutting no more than $50 million from the higher education budget.

MU spokesman Christian Basi said decisions made by the board would not be based on the Senate Appropriations Committee's budget suggestions.

"Right now, we are currently planning tuition for next year to be set with the agreement that we made with Gov. Nixon," Basi said. "We are not ready to speculate on what would happen should that agreement not go through."

Board of Curators Vice Chairman Warren Erdman said it is possible many aspects of tuition rates would not be discussed at the board's meeting.

"The Board of Curators will discuss some tuition and fees this week at the Rolla meeting," Erdman said. "However, I believe that we may not be able to consider all of them at this meeting. The Missouri General Assembly is still considering appropriations for the upcoming year, and until those appropriation levels are known with more certainty, it may not be possible to take action on all of the tuition issues for next year."
Consumer Price Index is related to tuition rates, according to policy on the Missouri Department of Higher Education Web site. If state legislators agree to cut more than $50 million from higher education, MU tuition rates could increase by as much as the consumer price index, or 2.1 percent.

In a UM system news release, UM system President Gary Forsee emphasized the university's loyalty to its students and its support of the current agreement with Nixon.

"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," Forsee said.

UM system Board of Curators Chairwoman Judith Haggard said the curators' decision would depend on the finalized state budget.

"We do not know the outcome of the legislators' decision at this time," Haggard said. "Our discussions will be based on that."
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Tax credit confusion could affect filing, returns

By Nicole Lebsack
April 13, 2010 | 12:01 a.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — As Thursday's tax deadline looms, last-minute filers are facing a set of tax credits, some new or expanded this year, that may cause a few headaches.

Andrew Zumwalt, an MU Extension associate state specialist in financial planning, said some credits are so confusing that people don't even realize they could qualify for them.

He encouraged keeping a cool head when dealing with taxes, even for last-minute filers who might be feeling some stress. Although some forms cannot be submitted online, Zumwalt advised taxpayers not to underestimate the power and convenience of electronic filing.

"That way, people don't need to know the math, they just need to know the law," he said.

Here is an explanation of tax matters that may be sources of confusion this year.

Homebuyer tax credits

First-time homebuyers are eligible for a tax credit of up to $8,000 on their 2009 tax returns, Zumwalt said.

Qualifying filers are classified as homebuyers who purchased a principal residence in 2009 (though the deadline has been extended to April 30).

Only those who did not own a home for at least three years are eligible. For married couples, neither spouse can have owned a home in the last three years.

Taxpayers who lived in the same home for at least five of the last eight years do qualify for up to $6,500 if they bought a house last year.
Energy tax credits

One tax credit aimed at easing the burden of home-improvement costs is the energy efficiency credit. Zumwalt said this credit gives people up to 30 percent of the money spent on qualified energy-efficient improvements, such as furnaces, insulation, windows, doors and water heaters. With a $1,500 cap, this means people could get up to $500 from this credit.

Making work pay

Under the economic stimulus package, federal withholding amounts were decreased for all workers after April 2009, Zumwalt said.

In addition, the government offered a $400 Making Work Pay credit to further encourage spending. But many workers fail to remember to claim it, Zumwalt said.

People who receive Social Security, disability or veteran's benefits could get the credit if they are employed, but it will be reduced by the amount of the economic recovery payment they received in the summer of 2009.

Workers still claimed as dependents saw the benefits of smaller withholding but cannot get the tax credit.

Earned income tax credit

Zumwalt said one credit that always causes confusion is the earned income tax credit. This is a refund for low-income earners that offsets the amount of payroll and Social Security taxes imposed by the government.

According to the IRS Web site, this credit was established to encourage employment, and those who qualify need to be sure to check to see if they are eligible.

Zumwalt said some taxpayers who haven't filed yet can get help from countywide assistance programs through the Columbia Public Library, Missouri United Methodist Church and MU Extension.
MU's Black Culture Center panel discussion encourages, informs students

By Lauren Rauth
April 12, 2010 | 11:49 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Three black panelists told MU students Monday night that they felt not much had changed at the university when it comes to race relations in the past several decades.

Arne1 Monroe, a special education teacher at Hickman High School who attended University of Central Missouri, said he recalled seeing Confederate flags flying when he attended MU football games.

"You'd see rebel flags all over campus," Monroe said.

Raymond Hayes, pastor at St. Luke's United Methodist Church and a MU alumnus, said there were few black faculty members during his time at MU. The Missourian has previously reported that, as of fall 2008, there were 47 black faculty members at MU out of 1,826 total faculty.

Hayes said he was "highly discouraged" from pursuing an engineering degree by his adviser because of his race.

"I didn't get any help. I was geared toward teaching," Hayes said. Hayes had been told in high school by a counselor that he would be "happier if he just went to an all-black school."

Marla Johnson, a nurse in the Columbia Public Schools, graduated from MU in 1974. She described the black community then as "a small community."
Alpha Phi Alpha, a black fraternity at MU, organized the panel as a part of Alpha Week. The laid-back atmosphere allowed students to ask questions and have an open conversation with the panelists.

One student asked if anything similar to the cotton ball incident happened during their time in college. On Feb. 26, cotton balls were scattered in front of the Gaines/Oldham Black Culture Center.

Two students, Sean Fitzgerald, 19, and Zachary Tucker, 21 were arrested for the incident on March 2. The two later apologized for their actions; no charges have been filed by the state.

Monroe said there were similar events at UCM to the incident during his college years. He said people would "dress up like black people" on Halloween, applying charcoal or ash on their face.

"I don't see a whole lot of change," Hayes said.

Despite the lack of changes, Hayes said he wished more high school students would be encouraged to attend college.

The panelists encouraged the students present to be positive role models for others, especially for Columbia high school students.

Hayes said the greatest influence for high school students has been interaction of MU students in the community.

"It does more than all the teaching I've ever done," Hayes said.

Monroe said "kids get caught up in the hip-hop culture," and don't realize that not everyone will become a rapper.

"When they see college students doing well, and who still listen to the same music — it can make a difference," Monroe said.

Events throughout Alpha Week include the Miss Black & Gold pageant and the Mizzou Black Woman's Initiative. All events are open and free for the public.
MU microbiologist elected fellow of American Academy of Microbiology

By Taylor Combs  
April 12, 2010 | 3:58 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — **MU professor of plant sciences and director of the Center for Sustainable Energy** Gary Stacey has received a fellowship from the **American Society for Microbiology**.

Stacey's work on the interactions between plant-microbes, specifically the nitrogen fixing symbiosis between legumes and bacteria, was chosen through a selective, peer-review process. Seventy-eight scientists were elected to the fellowship this year, and Stacey is the only one from MU.

"I'm extremely pleased for two reasons," Stacey said. "It's an illustrious body to be elected to, and it means one of your colleagues had to think enough of you to put together the application for the nomination."

Stacey's lab recently participated in mapping and sequencing the soybean genome, the first published complete draft genome sequence for a major crop legume species.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Missouri Kidney Program hit with state budget cut

NO MU Mention

*The Missouri Kidney Program is located at MU*

By LEE HILL KAVANAUGH/The Kansas City Star
April 12, 2010 | 12:39 p.m. CDT

KANSAS CITY — He has watched the faces of those who have learned that kidney dialysis was in their future.

"They always have this deer-in-the-headlights look. ... That 'holy-crap-I'm-gonna-die-with-this' look," he said.

Bobby Brim knows because he's been there, too.

When people hear for the first time that they need dialysis or they will die, "that's a very scary thing."

As a volunteer patient presenter, Brim, 52, of Pleasant Valley, tells his story to newly diagnosed kidney patients. He tries to show them that not only can they live, but they can have a life, something he learned in classes sponsored by the Missouri Kidney Program. Volunteering in the classes is his way of giving back.

"Let's put it this way: Without the Missouri Kidney Program, I think I would have lost my mind," Brim said.

The $3.8 million state-funded program was hit this fiscal year with a 25 percent budget cut, or about $940,000. Kidney patients and the social workers who help them already are feeling the effects.
Social workers predict the cuts will lead to increased costs for the state next year. They expect that more sick renal patients will require more intensive medical care.

The National Institutes of Health estimates that every dollar spent on patient education saves $3 to $4 in medical costs. The Missouri Kidney Program’s seminars have helped thousands of patients.

But the program is little-known outside the circle of kidney patients and those who care for them, said Beth Witten, a social worker who has worked with kidney patients for 31 years.

"These cuts are penny-wise and pound-foolish," Witten said. Witten is one of the leaders of the Council of Nephrology Social Workers for eastern Kansas and western Missouri.

Too many people are overwhelmed by the diagnosis, Witten said. If they ignore their kidney problems, they get sicker and lose their jobs and their health insurance. They drain their savings and lose their homes. They end up in hospital emergency rooms needing emergency dialysis. The state ends up paying the medical bills.

"Patients who learn about kidney disease and then take an active role in this do better," Witten said. "And the cost savings to the state are enormous."

Perhaps the Missouri Kidney Program’s best asset is its seminars, which can prepare newly diagnosed patients or those who soon will be on dialysis for how their lives will change.

Brim shook his head when he imagined what might have happened to him if there had been no class.

He said he probably would have quit his job, having to tether himself to a dialysis machine three times a week for four hours at a time. He worried the medical bills would drain his family’s savings, perhaps cost them their home. He thought he was a dying man with no hope.

The two-day seminar changed everything. Brim learned how his kidneys worked.

He learned the pros and cons of different types of dialysis, or perhaps a kidney transplant. Armed with information, he felt confident choosing an at-home dialysis
option that he could schedule around his life, instead of him scheduling his life around dialysis.

The Missouri Kidney Program "gave me my life back," Brim said.

More than 3,000 patients, along with families and friends, have attended the free classes.

Last year, the Missouri Kidney Program offered six classes in the Kansas City area, six in St. Louis and several elsewhere in the state. Witten said that because of the budget cuts, only four classes will be offered this year in Kansas City, four in St. Louis and four elsewhere.

The state budget cut is affecting other parts of the Missouri Kidney Program, too. The program reduced the assistance it gives patients to pay for insurance deductibles and transportation to dialysis clinics. It also cut its emergency aid that allowed low-income patients to get medicine.

Now patients scramble to pay costs they can't afford — or turn to the state for care at much greater costs.

Dorothy New, 91, lives in North Kansas City on a fixed $900 a month. The kidney program used to pay $200 a month for her supplemental health insurance. The insurance company pays for her dialysis medications, which cost thousands of dollars a month.

A few months ago, New learned that the kidney program would pay only $100 toward the insurance. She must now pay the other $100.

"But I really don't have it, so I'm not going to worry about it. I just roll with the punches," New said, leaning on a walker. "I've outlived my savings. When you live so long, things like that happen to you. If I don't have it, the state will have to buy it for me. ...You don't suppose they're hoping we'll just die off, do you?"

If New can't make her payments and loses her insurance, the state will end up paying the thousands of dollars each month for her medications.
Special Report: Are Regulators Dropping The Ball on Biocrops?

By REUTER

Filed at 8:45 a.m. ET

COLUMBIA, Missouri (Reuters) - Robert Kremer, a U.S. government microbiologist who studies Midwestern farm soil, has spent two decades analyzing the rich dirt that yields billions of bushels of food each year and helps the United States retain its title as breadbasket of the world.

Kremer's lab is housed at the University of Missouri and is literally in the shadow of Monsanto Auditorium, named after the $11.8 billion-a-year agricultural giant Monsanto Co.. Based in Creve Coeur, Missouri, the company has accumulated vast wealth and power creating chemicals and genetically altered seeds for farmers worldwide.

But recent findings by Kremer and other agricultural scientists are raising fresh concerns about Monsanto's products and the Washington agencies that oversee them. The same seeds and chemicals spread across millions of acres of U.S. farmland could be creating unforeseen problems in the plants and soil, this body of research shows.

Kremer, who works for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service (ARS), is among a group of scientists who are turning up potential problems with glyphosate, the key ingredient in Monsanto's Roundup and the most widely used weed-killer in the world.

"This could be something quite big. We might be setting up a huge problem," said Kremer, who expressed alarm that regulators were not paying enough attention to the potential risks from biotechnology on the farm, including his own research.

Concerns range from worries about how nontraditional genetic traits in crops could affect human and animal health to the spread of herbicide-resistant weeds.

Biotech crop supporters say there is a wealth of evidence that the crops on the market are safe, but critics argue that after only 14 years of commercialized GMOs, it is still unclear whether or not the technology has long-term adverse effects.

But whatever the point of view on the crops themselves, there are many people on both sides of the debate who say that the current U.S. regulatory apparatus is ill-equipped to adequately address the concerns. Indeed, many experts say the U.S. government does more to promote
global acceptance of biotech crops than to protect the public from possible harmful consequences.

"We don't have a robust enough regulatory system to be able to give us a definitive answer about whether these crops are safe or not. We simply aren't doing the kinds of tests we need to do to have confidence in the safety of these crops," said Doug Gurian-Sherman, a scientist who served on a FDA biotech advisory subcommittee from 2002 to 2005.

"The U.S. response (to questions about biotech crop safety) has been an extremely patronizing one. They say 'We know best, trust us,'" added Gurian-Sherman, now a senior scientist at the Union of Concerned Scientists, a nonprofit environmental group.

CALL FOR CHANGE

The World Health Organization has not taken a stand on biotech crops generally, simply stating "individual GM foods and their safety should be assessed on a case-by-case basis."

And while many scientists around the world cite research they say shows health and environmental risks tied to GMOs, many other scientists say research proves the crops are no different than conventional types.

With a growing world population and a need to increase food production in poor nations, confidence in the regulatory system in the leading biotech crop country is considered critical.

"One of the things that we think is important to do is to have regular reviews and updates of our strategies for regulating products of biotechnology," said Roger Beachy, a biotech crop supporter who was appointed last year as director of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

"We want to look carefully to see that they are logical and science-based but still maintain the confidence of the consumer to ensure that the projects that are developed and released have the highest level of oversight," added Beachy.

So far, that confidence has been lacking. Courts have cited regulators for failing to do their jobs properly and advisers and auditors have sought sweeping changes.

Even Wall Street has taken note. In January, shares in Monsanto fell more than 3 percent amid a rush of hedging activity during a morning trading session after a report by European scientists in the International Journal of Biological Sciences found signs of toxicity in the livers and kidneys of rats fed the company's biotech corn.

Monsanto has said the European study had "unsubstantiated conclusions," and says it is confident its products are well tested and safe.

Story continues...
IncludeMe campaign continues push for non-discrimination

The campaign has not yet reached the UM system Board of Curators.

By Jessica Silverman

Published April 13, 2010

The campaign to incorporate gender identity and expression into the UM system's non-discrimination policy has yet to reach the UM system Board of Curators or other UM campuses, despite the continuous push from campaign leaders.

Sean Jarvis, InsideOut president and IncludeMe campaign co-leader, said Pride Month events in April, such as Friday's Day of Silence, should bring attention to the campaign.

Jarvis said he's primarily interested in continuing to educate incoming undergraduates and current students.

"I have an understanding that the Board of Curators isn't going to be a fast process," Jarvis said. "That's how it works institutionally. We don't want to get into a situation where we have it at the very high levels, but we don't have any student advocates to explain the elements of it."

Erin Horth, Triangle Coalition president and IncludeMe campaign co-leader, said the next step is an e-mail campaign.

"We'll write a form letter people can send to pressure whoever they know on Faculty Council and in departments," Horth said. "We want Faculty Council to consider the issue and departments to change specific policies."

Horth said the campaign plans on holding a rally to gain support and raise morale but gaining support just from students isn't the issue.

"We need faculty support here and faculty and students on other campuses," Horth said.

Horth and Jarvis said they have not been in communication with Missouri Students Association President Tim Noce.

"I need to make a step to contact him because he hasn't made any attempt to contact us," Horth said.
Noce said he met with UM system President Gary Forsee in March, two weeks before spring break, and discussed changing the non-discrimination policy to include gender identity and expression.

"We got that pushed to system-level," Noce said. "We are currently trying to, for lack of a better term, court the Board of Curators."

Noce said the next step is to bring the issue to the other UM campuses.

"That's been the biggest hurdle," Noce said. "It seems like we're making strides. It's such a long road when you have to do a system change."

Noce said he plans to follow up on the progress of the campaign after the next Intercampus Student Council meeting, where it will be put to a vote.

He said he doubts the issue has reached the curators.

"They don't bring things up to the curators unless it has all the campuses' support," Noce said. "We have to explain the change that has to be made to the other systems because it's such a complex issue."

Noce said he would be talking to Horth and Jarvis after the ISC meeting to see what steps need to be taken.

Horth, who is a senior, will graduate this semester, leaving Jarvis in charge for next year.

"Basically what I think we'll be doing next year is continuing to talk to departments and faculty counsel," Jarvis said. "And continuing to take into account that Faculty Council is going to take a look at the proposal and be able to give a recommendation to the board of curators if they end up seeing it, depending on Forsee's decision."

Chancellor Brady Deaton met with Forsee on March 25 to discuss the possible non-discrimination policy clause. Horth said she has not heard from Deaton.

Jarvis said he wants to have students advocating with knowledge of the issue's context when the final decision is made.

"Two years from now, everyone familiar with the campaign will have graduated," Jarvis said. "Then (the campaign) doesn't have much context or it may not be seen for what it is."

Jarvis said Pride Month is a time when students can be educated about queer politics on campus and when there is more coverage of the campaign.

"IncludeMe is not only about queer communities," Jarvis said. "But the leadership is connected heavily to queer leaders on campus."
The MU student-athlete graduation rate ranks highly in the Big 12.

By Zachary Murdock

Published April 13, 2010

With only three weeks of classes left in the semester, graduation nears for many seniors. For student-athletes, this time can mark the end of an athletic career or the beginning of a professional one.

Student-athlete graduation success rates are used to track their success in the classroom. U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan proposed using this statistic to grant or deny teams entry into the NCAA men's basketball tournament in March.

Duncan proposed schools with graduation rates less than 40 percent be banned from playing in the tournament. At a 36 percent graduation rate, Missouri was among the 12 listed, but GSR statistics might be misleading.

"Over time, we should set a higher bar," Duncan said in the news release. "But it's a minimum, a bright line, which every program should meet to vie for post-season honors."

Released each year, the GSR is defined on the NCAA research Web site as a six-year portion of student-athletes who graduated compared against those who entered universities on institutional aid.

In March, the Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sports at Central Florida published an annual study of the graduation rates of schools that participated in this year's NCAA basketball tournament. The study compared the GSR scores of all the teams playing in this year's tournament and found 12 teams had graduation rates of less than 40 percent.

"Without question, 36 percent is unacceptable," Athletics Department Academic Services Director Joe Scogin said. "As a department, we understand that these numbers are something we need to improve on."

Before being published, GSR data is analyzed by the NCAA and is compared statistically to Division I averages, but the process takes several years.
As published by the NCAA, the most current GSR statistics include the incoming freshman class of 1999, which produce freshman-cohort graduation rates for 2002-2003. Because of the process of publishing and analyzing GSR data, the most current published numbers range anywhere from seven to 11 years old.

The NCAA does publish more current statistics regarding student-athlete academic success. The Academic Progress Rate is defined on the NCAA research Web site as a term-by-term measure of academics and retention for student athletes and was developed as an indicator for eventual graduation rates.

In addition to the APR, MU keeps its own unofficial data on student-athlete success. Scogin said the athletics department is very optimistic about future rates and MU's numbers are only going up.

MU had a 75 percent graduation rate for all student-athletes last year, and the athletics department projects an 80 percent rate this year, Scogin said. Those numbers, published by MU, are made public each May.

MU's APR statistics have been very encouraging, Scogin said. Although the NCAA does not compare statistics within conferences, MU has led the Big 12 Conference in APR standings five years in a row, and this year, 16 of 20 sports rank in the conference's top three.

"Those are real-time statistics," Scogin said. "Those students are in your campus and your teams from semester to semester. We like looking at that number, because it tells us what's happening at Missouri right now."

The MU athletics department focuses on a statistic called the "exhausted eligibility graduation rate," Scogin said.

That rate excludes student-athletes who choose to transfer schools or leave MU early to play sports professionally. The statistic only counts student-athletes who exhaust all their years of eligibility at MU.

Based on the exhausted eligibility graduation rate, men's basketball has a graduation rate of 86 percent, football a rate of 88 percent, and MU has a 95 percent graduation rate for all student-athletes who have exhausted their eligibility at MU.

"We want to graduate every student that exhausts their eligibility here," Scogin said. "They have given us a chance to help them graduate from the University of Missouri."

MU also has programs to help student-athletes succeed academically, Scogin said.

"Our goal is to help our student-athletes graduate, regardless of whether or not that helps our numbers," Scogin said. "I think the numbers are a byproduct of what the program is really all about."
Editorial:

Gender identity and expression worthy of curator discussion

Published April 13, 2010

The UM system Board of Curators has yet to incorporate gender identity and expression into the UM system's non-discrimination policy, turning a deaf ear to MU students. This is ridiculous considering the strong push from student leaders, as well as various departments and faculty members at MU.

As usual, it seems the Board of Curators is simply avoiding putting an issue on the agenda in hopes that push for it will fade -- this is both typical and unacceptable.

The Board of Curators says it wants to see more support from all four universities within the system before supporting the initiative, but such strong support from its flagship university should be enough to get the issue on an agenda. Not that any of the other schools have opposed it, but it seems they haven't felt the need to push for it. Is strong support from only one school enough to continue discriminating against a group of people?

No, it's not.

Student curator Laura Confer should lobby on behalf of students to explain the issue and its importance to the Board of Curators. Confer could also help a bit by garnering support from her school, Missouri University of Science and Technology.

Although it's easy to place blame on the curators for this, it's also important for student leaders to educate underclassmen about the issue. In two years, those students pushing the hardest for the gender identity and expression non-discrimination policy will graduate and others will have to take over the initiative. It's especially important for students to know the relevance and importance of this initiative, so curators can't simply push it to the wayside until support dies down just because students with the original thought are gone.

We commend Sean Jarvis, InsideOUT president and IncludeMe campaign co-leader, for recognizing this possible problem and working to educate underclassmen.

In addition, we commend the idea of bringing more attention to the IncludeMe campaign through Pride Month. Events, such as the National Day of Silence, might do more to raise student morale and support. But more support or awareness, even if it's not from the upper administration, won't
hurt the campaign. This is especially true since the initiative could eventually depend on the support of future students, who might not be tuned into the issue yet.

Missouri Students Association President Tim Noce did bring the issue to the attention of UM system President Gary Forsee in March, which is also a good thing, but there seems to be a lack of discussion between Noce and IncludeMe campaign co-leaders Jarvis and Triangle Coalition President Erin Horth. Although it's great Noce is lobbying on behalf of the student body, the IncludeMe leaders who know the issue best are probably better candidates to explain gender identity and expression to curators and the administration.

To put it bluntly, the curators will probably continue avoiding this issue, so it's important for students not to lose hope and continue to be a driving force for the inclusion of gender identity and expression in the UM system.