Extent of travel cuts varies at MU

Most divisions ‘felt the pinch.’

By Janese Heavin

An annual campus facilities conference at the University of Missouri was called off. Deans stopped accompanying staff and faculty on trips. Private donations helped plug expense gaps.

Across the UM System, campuses sliced travel budgets last year to comply with an administrative call to significantly reduce trip expenses.

“I definitely think the majority of us have felt the pinch,” said Michael Taksar, an MU math professor and chair of Faculty Council’s fiscal affairs committee. “There really was not much to cut to begin with,” he said, noting that travel dollars oftentimes come from research grant funding that is funneled through the general operating budget and returned to departments.

UM System President Gary Forsee called for administrators to significantly reduce travel budgets and other non-salary expenses in January 2009 — the middle of the university’s fiscal year. Because that call came when it did, the Tribune compared travel expenses by calendar year instead of by fiscal year. Travel expenses include not only trips taken off campus but also costs associated with recruiting new administrators or faculty members and on-campus expenses related to special events and meetings.

MU reduced travel expenses last year by 34.6 percent, spending $5.4 million less than in 2008. System employees cut travel expenses in half, spending about $1 million less last year. And across the four-campus system, travel expenditures were reduced by $10 million, or 34.5 percent, from in 2008.

“Overall, we’re pleased with the decreases in these expenses we have been able to achieve through careful management of resources,” MU spokeswoman Mary Jo Banken said.

Here’s a closer look at how MU colleges and departments cut travel expenses from the general operating budget last year.

Campus Facilities reduced travel expenses by 74 percent, spending some $79,000 less than in 2008. The reduction came after MU’s facilities department called off an annual conference, spokesman Karlan Seville said.

“We called administrators on other campuses, and they were in the same boat, telling us they were not going to be able to come anyway,” she said.
With the help of private sponsors who paid for supplies and meals, MU hosted the conference this year.

**MU Extension** reduced its travel costs by more than half last year, spending $1.17 million less than in 2008.

**The Missouri School of Journalism** spent $821,000 less last year than in 2008, a reduction of 65 percent. Travel expenses in 2008 likely were unusually high, however, because the college celebrated its centennial anniversary that year, Banken noted.

**The School of Nursing** spent 63 percent less on trips last year. Other colleges reduced travel budgets by an average of 29 percent.

**The College of Arts & Sciences** reduced travel expenses the least, cutting less than 1 percent.

Dean Michael O’Brien said he asked his 28 chairs to reduce expenses across the board, giving them latitude on where those savings would come from. Although cost-cutting might not have shown up in trip expenses, O’Brien noted that the college reduced its general operating expenses by nearly $880,000.

Most colleges mandated a freeze on travel deemed unnecessary, Banken said, but she stressed that deans must balance those savings with the mission of the university. Some travel is critical, she said, such as events that help bring new dollars to the university and those that promote MU’s research mission.

“As division heads have made decisions about expending these funds, they have kept in mind” Chancellor Brady Deaton’s “cautions that we cannot become paralyzed or compromise our primary mission of teaching, research, service and economic development,” Banken said in an e-mail.

This year through March, MU has spent more than $2.74 million on travel, about $500,000 more than this time last year. However, looking at the fiscal year — which runs from July 1, 2009, through March — total travel expenses are down 14 percent from the same period the previous year.

Reach Janese Heavin at 573-815-1705 or e-mail jheavin@columbiatribune.com.
Tap Day unveils secret rites

Societies work behind scenes.

Left, Bill Bush removes the hood of University of Missouri basketball player Jarrett Sutton during the Tap Day celebration. Below, Joe Muenster, right, a senior tapped last year as a member of QEBH, whose acronym conceals a secret organization name, guides this year’s initiates down the stairs to their seats before the 83rd annual Tap Day celebration at Jesse Hall.

By Janese Heavin

Saturday, April 24, 2010

Cloaked in robes and hoods that kept their identities temporarily hidden, dozens of University of Missouri students were unveiled yesterday as members of the campus’s six secret societies.
Called Tap Day, it’s the one event where members of those groups accept public recognition. For the most part, these organizations work behind the scenes promoting MU and helping others.

“The point is to recognize those who do a lot of things and do things not for recognition,” said Joe Muenster, a senior tapped last year as a member of QEBH, whose acronym conceals a secret organization name. “This is the one day to let people know who they are.”

Inclement weather forced the 83rd annual Tap Day celebration from its usual home on Francis Quadrangle into Jesse Hall, where a packed audience waited for inductees to be introduced.

Parents of students being tapped are invited to attend the ceremony, while inductees’ roommates, friends and other supporters are encouraged to come but told only that someone they know is getting tapped.

“It’s really such an incredible thing,” Ashley McDonald, a senior member of QEBH said, remembering her own unveiling last year.

Inductees ranged from students active in campus government to student athletes to those who have been involved in international relations. In addition to students, organizations also unveil honorary taps, including this year a retired MU police officer.

QEBH is the oldest secret society on campus. It was founded in 1898 by Royall Hill Switzler, who defined the group’s mission as having the university’s best interest at heart and to be on guard “against the weakening of the moral side of collegiate education.”

Other societies include the Mystical Seven, which came out of secrecy in 1907; LSV, a group focused on women’s interests on campus; Mortar Board, which recognizes seniors committed to scholarship; Omicron Delta Kappa, a leadership society; and the Rollins Society, founded in 1994 to recognize graduate and professional students.

“We’re honoring the best and the brightest,” Chancellor Brady Deaton said, praising inductees for embodying Mizzou values.

“Our future is, indeed, in your hands.”

Reach Janese Heavin at 573-815-1705 or e-mail jheavin@columbiatribune.com.
MU secret societies unveil new initiates at Tap Day

By Ally Anderson
April 23, 2010 | 6:53 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Six MU honor societies unveiled initiates on Friday in the same style as in years past, but without the procession to the Columns on Francis Quadrangle.

The new members, dressed in colorful robes and wearing hoods to conceal their identities, were marched to the Jesse Hall stage for ceremonies after wet grounds forced MU's 83rd annual Tap Day indoors.

Tap Day recognizes the exemplary performance of students in several different arenas, including service to the community, academics and leadership.

Each society also had "honorary taps" for faculty, staff or alumni who were chosen for influencing students in a positive way.

"We take pride in our students," said Cathy Scroggs, vice chancellor for student affairs. "They put the interests of others before their own."

The honor societies include QEBH, Mystical Seven, LSV, Mortar Board, Omicron Delta Kappa and the Rollins Society.

QEBH was founded in 1898 by Royall Hill Switzer and is the oldest honor society on campus.

Initiate Jarrett Sutton said he was excited about meeting new students in QEBH. "I get to see the history that goes into the school, and it's really cool to be a part of it," he said.

Sutton belongs to the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, plays for the MU men's basketball team and is a member of the Student Athlete Advisory Committee. He was also involved with Special Olympics.
Mystical Seven, the second-oldest honor society at MU, recognizes seven students each year who display leadership and character.

Junior Andrew Lorenz, who was inducted into Mystical Seven, said he's looking forward to joining a new campus family for his senior year. “It is a way to close out a great experience,” he said.

Lorenz was a Summer Welcome leader in 2009 and a peer educator for sexual violence prevention.

LSV was founded in 1908 by a group of women who were concerned about their status on campus. For LSV, Tap Day marks the end of a year of service. For the other societies, Tap Day signifies the beginning of service for the campus and community.
MU graduate students share their research

Lily Morgan, 4, pokes a hole in a cup of dirt to plant a watermelon seed with help from Kasey Hames, left, a graduate student representing the University of Missouri’s Division of Plant Sciences at yesterday’s family event at Jesse Hall celebrating Graduate Education Week.

By Janese Heavin

Sure, Kasey Hames is smart: She’s a graduate student studying aflatoxin resistance in Zea mays at the University of Missouri’s Division of Plant Sciences. But yesterday she mastered one of her tougher assignments: Making that research relevant to children.

During the fourth annual Adventures in Graduate Education event, Hames showed youngsters how seeds become plants that become edible products that land in their morning cereal.
Displaying examples of each stage, including a box of Cheerios, her educational booth at the event took a first-place award for bringing awareness to graduate work at MU.

“We’re hoping to encourage them to think about graduate school as they approach college age, and especially show them what we do is really interesting and relevant,” Hames said. “The things they eat, that’s what we’re working on.”

Dozens of graduate students spent four hours yesterday showing more than 200 attendees how the work they do at MU affects day-to-day life. Biology students demonstrated the life of a cell, engineers showed youngsters how computers talk, and archeology students gave children a chance to practice digging in a mock excavation site.

“For us it’s exciting to be able to share something with the kids and hopefully inspire them,” said Petronella Hove, a graduate student studying public health who hosted a booth on dog bites.

There are two main reasons MU’s Graduate School puts on the family-friendly event, said Dean George Justice. First, it’s a way to get youngsters to start thinking about their futures. Secondly, the demonstration booths also teach graduate students useful skills.

“They’re learning real skills, how to interact with the public and explain what we do at the university,” Justice said.

Students and faculty work together to figure out how to make research interesting for average citizens, he said.

Yesterday’s event didn’t just provide a gown-and-town opportunity; it also raised awareness about work at MU to some coming from outside the Mid-Missouri area, including Melissa Richardson of Reed Springs. She was there with her family because her son was participating in a debate tournament elsewhere on campus, and the graduate school program, held in Jesse Hall, provided some indoor fun on a rainy day.

“We were looking for something to do,” said Richardson, who had her two daughters in tow. “This is fabulous.”

The activity helped wrap up Graduate Education Week at Mizzou. The statewide awareness week also included workshops on how to apply for graduate school, internal awards and an event to recognize lawmakers supportive of graduate education, including Republican Sen. Kurt Schaefer of Columbia.

Reach Janese Heavin at 573-815-1705 or e-mail jheavin@columbiatribune.com.
Graduate School outreach program entertains and teaches children

By Doug Davis
April 25, 2010 | 12:01 a.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Graduate students from a number of MU departments including chemistry, German and plant sciences taught local children about their work in Saturday's "Adventures In Education," held in Jesse Hall.

"Adventures in Education" is a graduate student-driven event, said Emily VanCourt, social studies doctoral student who is also national issues coordinator for the MU Graduate Professional Council, which co-sponsors the program with the MU Graduate Student Association.

A booth staffed by Kalyani Upendram, master's student in electrical engineering, had a robotics demonstration.

"I'm showing that robot senses are like our own human senses," Upendram said. She said the event was a good place to tell students about robotics camps held by her department in the summer, where first- through ninth-grade students can build robots and learn to program them.

Mark and Jackie Roland visited the plant sciences department booth "From Seeds to Supper" with their children, Zack, 8, Isabella, 6, and Tanner, 4. The booth, which taught students about plants used to make familiar supermarket foods such as breakfast cereals and cooking oils, won first prize among the booths at the event.

The Rolands learned about the event though fliers sent home from Fairview Elementary school, Mark Roland said. He said their children enjoy the outreach events hosted by various departments and colleges at MU.

"We try to attend a lot of them," he said. They attended one at the veterinary school earlier this month, he said.
Kristofferson Culmer, who is next year's Graduate Professional Council president-elect and a master's student in computer science, hosted a booth named "Let's Talk Computer."

Culmer spelled out "kris" in binary code for Columbia Catholic School students Eleanor Fay and Annalisa Geger, both 9. He taught about the binary language used by computers to represent information that people put into them.

"Travels of My T-Shirt," hosted by graduate students from the textile and apparel management department, gave a lesson in globalism by demonstrating the round-the-world trip taken by U.S.-grown cotton, most of which is sent to Africa or Asia to be made into clothing.

Booth visitors checked the tags on their clothing to find the country of manufacture. Then they were given a sticker to place on a graph showing where their clothing was made. The stickers were placed mostly on Asia, Africa and Central America.

Amanda Muhammad, doctoral student, said the goal of the booth was to get students to think about the cost of labor involved in making their clothes. The booth won third place among the booths at the event.

The chemistry department took second place for "Chemistry Is Cool," where students got to see a "traffic-light liquid" which changed from yellow to red and finally to green when shaken.

Several hundred attendees visited booths representing almost 20 disciplines from the MU graduate school during the event.

Doug Davis, an education reporter for the Missourian attended the event with his 8-year daughter Samantha. To read his account as a father go to schoolhousetalk.wordpress.com.
Educators vs. Tax Credits

Gov. Jay Nixon, right, alongside UM System President Gary Forsee and Missouri first lady Georganne Wheeler Nixon, speaks on behalf of tax credit reform measures last week.

By Terry Ganey

JEFFERSON CITY — As Gov. Jay Nixon assembled Missouri educators last week to fight for his plan to curb state tax credit spending, Rep. Sally Faith held the House floor arguing for an extension of a tax credit for contributions to pregnancy resource centers.

House Speaker Ron Richard, R-Joplin, left, and Speaker Pro Tem Bryan Pratt, R-Blue Springs, discuss opposition to Nixon's plan.
In the list of Missouri’s 60-plus tax credit schemes, the one Faith wanted to prolong accounts for relatively small change: $951,744 redeemed during the 2009 fiscal year. Under the program, an individual or business that contributes to a pregnancy resource center gets back 50 percent of the contribution in the form of a credit on state income or corporate taxes.

Such centers are supposed to help women with a crisis or unplanned pregnancy by offering services that help them carry their pregnancies to term. The credit was scheduled to expire in 2012.

Faith, a Republican from St. Charles, wanted it extended to 2022. The House approved.

One of the many issues Nixon faces in attempting to reduce tax credit expenditures is the fact that, over the years, each one has built up its own constituency, which can argue that the credit underwrites a worthy cause. Nixon has targeted two big ones — historic preservation ($186 million) and low-income housing ($106 million).

The people interested in preserving those have well-connected lobbyists to push their messages. Many others who will line up to oppose Nixon’s attempt to overhaul the system will be people who rely on those credits for income — carpenters, laborers and architects whose jobs depend on the credits’ financing construction projects. And there are many others, too, who will be calling their lawmakers to protect community assistance programs that finance maternity homes, special-needs adoptions and domestic violence centers.

“There are folks out there who would like to see this not addressed,” Nixon acknowledged last week.

**ABRUPT U-TURN**

A man who likes sports metaphors, Nixon should know that bringing in Missouri’s education community last week to encourage lawmakers to reform the tax credit system was like a “Hail Mary pass.” The argument the educators are supposed to make is that the state’s top priorities — K-12 and higher education — cannot be adequately financed if money is taken off the top to pay for tax credit entitlements.

“Tax credits are important economic development tools, but those dollars are then unavailable for other vital purposes, including public higher education,” said Carolyn Mahoney, Lincoln University president and the president of the Council on Public Higher Education.

It’s probably the best time to make that argument. The overall state budget faces a gap of nearly $1 billion. Last year, the state redeemed an estimated $449 million in tax credits, not counting the one for senior citizens’ property taxes.

But despite the fiscal problems, there are three reasons to doubt that tax credit reform will take place this session:
With three weeks remaining before adjournment and budget issues still looming, there is little time to sort out such a complicated issue. As one state senator once remarked, the easiest thing to do in the General Assembly is nothing.

Nixon, himself, lacks standing as a strong advocate on the issue because he has done more than his share of tax credit spending in the past. For more than 17 years, he has had a place on the Missouri Housing Development Commission, which issues hundreds of millions of dollars in tax credits.

House opposition is strong, especially among the leaders.

Nixon hopes an economic development bill percolating in the Senate can be amended to include his plan to cut back tax credit spending to about $314 million, 70 percent of the amount redeemed last year. The plan would also boil down the 60 existing programs into six broad categories: business development, community assistance, public infrastructure, redevelopment, affordable housing and finance insurance. His Department of Economic Development would determine whether a particular program meets standards in terms of its return to taxpayers and value to the community.

"There has to be an ability with limited resources to choose on a rational basis which projects and which deals make the best difference for Missouri," Nixon said. "We’ve got to shift off the current method, which is basically entitlement."

Some senators want to chip away at tax credit reform; others want a wholesale overhaul or repeal. Some support the idea of giving legislative appropriations committees the power to allocate tax credit spending. Resolving the issue before May 14 adjournment will be difficult.

Then, there’s the House to contend with. Last week, leaders of the Republican-controlled House stood up to support tax credit subsidies for job creation in the same way that Democrats in Congress stood up last year for stimulus spending to restart the economy.

Speaker Ron Richard, R-Joplin, said cutting credits now would send “shock waves through the whole economy.” He noted that downtown St. Louis and Kansas City had been redeveloped with the help of tax credits.

“You tell me that they haven’t worked,” Richard said.

Rep. John Diehl, R-Town and Country, characterized Nixon’s plan as “an abrupt U-turn that will drive us into a ditch in terms of economic development.”

Diehl noted that Nixon traveled the state last year touting a bill that extended tax credits to businesses and that it has yet to produce any new jobs.

“Our point is: Let’s do this in a reasonable, rational, measured manner to make sure we don’t pull out the rug from economic development,” Diehl said.

BIGGER REVENUE BITES
Tax credits are popular with lawmakers because they provide a way to reward special interests who want them without accompanying accountability to taxpayers. Their costs are indirect and not easily noticed.

"Tax credits are not a direct government expenditure subject to the normal budget and appropriation controls," wrote Mickey Wilson, director of the Legislative Oversight Division, in a letter on the issue. "Instead, they result in a reduction of a government entity’s tax revenues."

Another issue is that not all tax credits get redeemed regularly. Some play out over years while some are cashed in immediately. No state agency has complete records of all the programs, and it’s not possible to determine the exact cost of the credits outstanding.

But it is known that tax credits are taking an increasingly larger bite out of state revenue. In 1999, tax credit redemptions amounted to 2.97 percent of related taxes, according to Wilson’s office. Last year, redemptions were 8 percent of related taxes.

"Available records indicate that the impact of tax credits on state revenues will continue to increase due to growth in current programs," Wilson added.

Business groups argue that tax credits are needed as a way of offering subsidies to compete with other states in attracting companies to Missouri. And when Nixon lined up about 70 educators to call for tax credit reform, it alarmed Daniel Mehan, president of the Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

"The proposed tax credit reforms will not have an immediate impact on the current Missouri budget," Mehan said. "That gives reason not to rush into such dramatic change this session. Economic development is a complex issue. It is not one that should be pushed through without thorough review and debate."

The whole issue of tax credit reform probably wouldn’t be on the table but for the fact that the state’s economy is in the worst shape since the Great Depression.

But still, advocates of tax credits seem to have little to worry about. Just before the House adjourned for the week, it approved a tax credit that proposes to spend as much as $10 million to attract big-time NCCA and Olympic sporting events to the state, as well as political conventions.

Reach Terry Ganey at 573-815-1708 or e-mail tganey@columbiatribune.com.
Efforts to decrease drinking recognized

Friday, April 23, 2010

The University of Missouri’s Wellness Resource Center recognized a business owner and three organizations for their work in reducing irresponsible and underage drinking in Columbia.

The WRC Awards ceremony has been a regular event for 15 years and is meant to honor individuals, groups and businesses who are strong collaborators in its prevention efforts.

• The Downtown Safety Task Force was recognized for its role in decreasing underage drinking at bars.

• Matt Istwan, manager and co-owner of Déjà Vu comedy club, was recognized for his management of safe and legal parties.

• Sustain Mizzou, a recycling group on the MU campus, received an award for its collaboration with WRC during tailgating parties at football games.

• MSA/GPC Craft Studio was awarded for its role in providing alcohol-free alternatives for students.

WRC supports wellness as it relates to areas including nutrition, self-esteem, stress reduction and alcohol and drug abuse.
Doctors Work To Reduce Costly Patient No-Shows

By Anya Martin

Ask your doctor's office about their pet peeves, and likely as not, patient no-shows will rank at the top of the list.

Recent research suggests many missed appointments aren't due to flaky patients but to scheduling errors or a doctor's failure to consider transportation and other logistical challenges for the most at-risk patients. These findings are leading some practices to rethink the way they handle referrals, from low-tech methods such as reminder calls to utilizing the latest health-information technology.

When researchers at the Indiana University School of Medicine and the Regenstrief Institute tracked nearly 7,000 primary-care patients age 65 or older at an Indianapolis geriatric clinic who were referred to a specialist, they were dismayed to discover that only 71% were ever scheduled for a needed follow-up appointment.

Of those, 70% were actually seen at the specialist's office, meaning that just 50% received the treatment that their primary-care doctor intended them to have, according to the study, published in the February 2010 issue of the Journal of Evaluation in Clinical Practice.

Because of the high percentage, researchers called missed specialist referrals the most frequent error in medicine. The adverse consequences can be significant, whether resulting in a worsened medical condition or higher costs, said Michael Weiner, associate professor of medicine at Indiana University and director of the Regenstrief Institute's Health Services Research Program.

"The most obvious one is the immediate care that would be provided is delayed," he said. "Rescheduling could take several months if it's a busy clinic or specialist."

Some unscheduled appointments and no-shows could be attributed to patient forgetfulness or anxiety about disability, transportation or the time and effort it would take to attend an appointment, issues which might apply disproportionately to seniors, he added.

But just as important was lack of a system to track whether specialist appointments were made and to avoid breaks in communication between the primary-care physician and specialist offices,
Weiner said. The chain can break down because of such mundane things as the specialist never receiving the referral because a fax machine ran out of paper.

Now a new computer-based scheduling system generates automated reminders to primary-care physicians if specialist scheduling doesn't happen in a timely manner. The tool also facilitates communication between the two to ensure the specialist understands the reason for referral and the primary-care doctor receives a report on the results.

Since instituting the system, the clinic has reduced its lack of completion rate to less than 20%.

Reducing No-Shows

The problem of missed appointments is hardly limited to seniors. The Sibley Heart Center at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, which handles 30,000 outpatient appointments at 18 facilities annually, rolled out a new initiative two months ago to reduce a 16.7% same-day cancellation and no-show rate.

The types of patients who were least likely to show often came from low-income families either on government coverage such as Medicaid or who were uninsured and self-pay, said Dr. Patrick Frias, a pediatric cardiologist and director of outpatient operations at the center.

"We hear it all," he said. "'We couldn't find the place. The directions were bad.' Some people didn't have a ride and didn't realize that Medicaid rides are available. Other patients say they forgot or they didn't like the parking."

Every patient's family routinely receives an automated reminder call 48 hours before the appointment. But for the five historically worst clinics for attendance, staff members now make a personal call five to seven days in advance to families from the two main no-show categories and anyone else who has missed an appointment previously, Frias said. The caller not only provides a reminder but also checks to see if directions are needed and the child has a ride, he added.

The program is in too early a stage for any comprehensive data to be available, but no-shows appear to be declining, he added.

Medicaid patients were most likely not to show up at an outpatient psychiatry clinic that reported a 19% to 22% no-show rate among 11,000 scheduled appointments in a 2009 University of Missouri study. Logistical issues, such as when the appointment was scheduled, were also significant predictors.

Medicaid patients never showed up for an appointment after 3 p.m. when local public transportation stopped for the day, and patients coming from a long distance rarely arrived for early morning appointments.

Schedulers with the least no-shows directly asked patients: "When would you like to come in?"
Staying On Top Of Appointments

The most important thing you can do to ensure you or a family member don't miss out on an important specialist referral is not to leave everything up to your doctor, said Sheryl Kurland, vice president of Patient Advocates of Orlando, Fla.

She often hears her clients complain about feeling overwhelmed with the "medical maze" or agonizing about long wait times to see their doctor, things that could tempt one to not call a doctor's office or to stay home, she added.

Kurland advises patients to prioritize their health appointments the same way they do for activities critical to protecting their business interests. "[You] certainly wouldn't miss an important business meeting," she said. "It would cost [you] dearly."

If you're concerned you may forget to set up your specialist appointment, ask your primary-care doctor's staff if they will make the appointment before you leave the office. That lessens the chance that you or the medical practice will forget to follow through, Weiner said.

If you leave scheduling up to your primary-care doctor's office and don't receive a date and time by two weeks after the referral, you should call the office, he said.

Another good idea, especially for older patients and anyone with hearing loss, is to bring someone else along with you to your appointments to help you keep track of any physician instructions, including referrals, Kurland said.

If you are juggling lots of appointments or family members live far away, a patient advocate can serve that purpose. If you can't afford one, nonprofit organizations such as the American Heart Association or the American Cancer Society may have volunteers who can offer assistance, she added.

Don't be afraid to ask for directions, express your concern about ability to pay for the visit or say when you can't make it due to work or transportation limitations, Frias said. The Sibley Heart Center employs a social worker specifically to help uninsured families obtain coverage, he added.

And if you have to miss an appointment, don't just not show up, said Kenneth T. Hertz, a principal in the HealthCare Consulting Group of the Medical Group Management Association, a trade association for practice administrators.

Instead, call the doctor's office as soon as you know you won't be able to make it, apologize and ask to reschedule, he said. That courtesy allows another patient to be fit into your empty slot.

Most medical practices don't charge for missed appointments, although it's likely that your dentist will, Hertz said.
Most employers don't help workers remember their specialist appointments, said Helen Darling, president of the National Business Group on Health, a nonprofit whose membership includes many of the country's largest employers.

"Most employers pay so much for specialty care that they don't feel there's underuse of specialty care," she said. Indeed, 24% of employers perceive that their employees overuse services by seeking inappropriate care, according to 2009 results of an annual survey conducted by the National Business Group on Health and Towers Watson.

However, some employers may provide general reminders for preventive screenings or give financial incentives to employees who engage in a disease-prevention program, which could include specialty services, Darling said.

Finally, in certain specialized situations, such as treatment related to an automobile accident or a worker's compensation claim, a pattern of missed appointments may cause a claims adjuster to question the validity of the injury for which treatment is being compensated, said Chris Davis, a principal in the Seattle-based Davis Law Group, PS.

In that case, you should definitely call the doctor's office to explain why you missed the appointment, but keep in mind that the reason you give will likely be noted in your medical record, he added.

"If you say it's because you're going on vacation, that could be a problem," Davis said.

(Anya Martin is a freelancer for MarketWatch. Anya can be reached at 415-439-6400 or via email at AskNewswires@dowjones.com.)
Where did journalism classes go?

By Peter Funt | April 26, 2010

WHILE THE newspaper industry worries about shrinking print editions and uncertain economics in the digital world, an equally vexing issue lurks. Where will the next generation’s journalists come from, and how well will they be trained?

In speaking to a workshop for award-winning high school reporters from across California, I was dismayed to learn how many of their schools have dropped journalism courses and cut back or eliminated student newspapers. In the last decade over 200 high schools in California have scrubbed journalism.

Nationally, the situation is similarly worrisome. According to Anita Luera, a director at the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism in Arizona, “Many high school journalism programs have suffered in recent years, the victim of budget cuts and other priorities, especially at schools with large minority populations.”

But beyond budgets, the increasingly rigid focus on core subjects and standardized tests has made some valuable electives, such as journalism, less important to high school administrators. That’s not only a shame, it’s misguided.

A study by the Newspaper Association of America showed that students who worked on high school papers and yearbooks scored better on college admission tests and tended to have higher grades in their first year of college. Notably, while the journalism trend line is plunging at high schools, it is actually rising at the college level. At Northwestern’s Medill School of Journalism, for example, the number of graduates is up by about 25 percent over the last decade; at the University of Missouri, the journalism school graduating classes are up 40 percent during the same period.

At these colleges, journalism is a core area of study, with its own revenue base. But at many high schools these days, news writing is viewed as more like, say, the cheerleading squad — the difference being few high school administrators would ever dare cut the cheerleading budget.

Some high schools that have managed to maintain student papers have cut frequency to monthly or quarterly. As a result, the publications become more feature and opinion oriented, while lacking hard news. This tends to feed the very problems that young writers face in the expanding online world, where everyone has an opinion and the glorious freedom to express it, but too often without proper discipline in reporting, editing and fact-checking. It’s difficult to develop a serious regard for these components of responsible journalism if there are no classes to teach them, and if the school paper, produced by an under-funded after-school club, doesn’t encourage them.
As I spoke with individual students at the workshop, the knowledge gap between those whose schools offered journalism and those for whom it was no longer available was stunning. It’s difficult to imagine the latter group succeeding in college journalism courses.

Even at colleges where journalism programs appear to be thriving, there are subtle shifts in curriculum that put less emphasis on the fundamentals of good reporting. Many schools, for example, are combining basic journalism with video and computer classes, where the focus tends to be more on the medium than the message. Sadly, this mirrors what is happening in the consumer marketplace.

As journalism’s economic and delivery models change at the professional level, it is more important than ever for colleges and high schools to ground students in the principles of good writing and reporting. Communities must find the means to restore high school journalism programs, lest the pipelines that flow to colleges and the professional world run dry.

Many observers of the current media scene fret for good reason about the careless, even reckless, state of what often passes for news in burgeoning outlets on the Internet and cable-TV dial. Journalists in the next generation can’t be counted upon to improve things unless they at least know better.

Peter Funt is a writer and TV host. ■
MU legend gets his due

Photo by Nick King | Buy this photo

Former Missouri baseball Coach Gene McArtor, center, cuts the ribbon yesterday during the grand opening of an indoor baseball facility bearing his name.

By Matt Nestor

Sunday, April 25, 2010

Missouri Associate Athletic Director Tim Hickman said there wasn’t much debate as he and baseball Coach Tim Jamieson discussed what to christen the recently constructed indoor practice facility at Taylor Stadium.
Former MU baseball player Ron Cox takes some cuts in the indoor batting cages at the McArtor Baseball Facility.

“It ended up being about a 30-second conversation,” Hickman said.

Then he spoke to Athletic Director Mike Alden, and “that went even quicker.”

The Tigers officially opened the McArtor Baseball Facility in a ceremony yesterday. It is named for longtime Missouri coach and administrator Gene McArtor, whose mother, wife, children and grandchildren were on hand for the dedication.

“I’m proud to have my name associated with this,” McArtor said. “I’m hoping maybe it’ll get me a few free swings along the way.”

“The Mac” houses three batting cages and dirt pitching mounds for year-round use.

“Obviously, you want to try and improve your situation to give yourself a chance to win more baseball games,” Jamieson said. “That’s really what it comes down to.”

A 1999 inductee into the MU Intercollegiate Athletics Hall of Fame, McArtor was an all-conference and all-district first baseman at Missouri from 1961-63, helping the Tigers win two Big Eight Conference titles and earn two NCAA appearances.

He was an assistant under John “Hi” Simmons from 1969-74 then was named head coach. His teams went 733-430-3 with two Big Eight titles and six NCAA Tournament bids in 21 years.

The MU baseball team’s scheduled doubleheader against Kansas State was rained out. The teams will try again today. They are scheduled to play a doubleheader with the first game beginning at noon.

Reach Matt Nestor at 573-815-1786 or e-mail mnestor@columbiatribune.com.