UPDATE: Missouri lawmakers approve changes to scholarships

JEFFERSON CITY — Scholarships could increase for students at Missouri's public universities but decrease for those attending private schools under legislation sent to Gov. Jay Nixon on Wednesday.

The changes to the Access Missouri scholarship program would take effect for the 2014-15 school year, giving this year's freshmen class a chance to complete their undergraduate degrees without rearranging their budgets.

The Access Missouri program provides aid to about 47,000 students based on financial need, according to figures from the Department of Higher Education. About 30,000 of those students attend public colleges and universities, and 17,000 go to private schools.

When lawmakers created Access Missouri in 2007 to replace several other scholarships, they established a maximum scholarship of $4,600 a year for students at private institutions, $2,150 for students at state universities and $1,000 for those at community colleges.

Supporters said the intent was to cover a roughly equal proportion of students' tuition, as private schools typically cost more than public colleges and universities. But Nixon and some lawmakers whose districts include state universities have pushed to change the program so that it provides an equal amount of money to students at public and private institutions.

Under pressure to reach a compromise, representatives of Missouri's public and private higher education institutions met in March in Columbia and agreed on a framework to adjust the scholarship amounts.
The bill passed Wednesday would raise the maximum scholarship to $1,300 for community college students and set it at $2,850 for students at either public universities or private institutions starting in 2014. The legislation passed the Senate 33-1 on Tuesday and cleared the House 149-5 on Wednesday.

The legislation also would tweak Missouri's "Bright Flight" scholarship, which goes to about 8,200 students who score well on the ACT or SAT college entrance exams. That scholarship historically has been awarded to those scoring in the top 3 percent of Missouri students. Eligibility was to be expanded to the top 5 percent next year under a state law, but Missouri faces a financial shortfall and its budget lacks the money needed for the expansion.

The bill passed Wednesday specifies that the scholarships should go first to the top 3 percent of students when state funding runs short.

Another provision in the legislation would expand an existing exemption to Missouri's open records law with the intent of shielding information about efforts to turn university research into commercial products. While most records for such partnerships would be kept secret, universities would have to release annual reports showing money and benefits paid to or received from the cooperating business or nonprofit group.

Supporters said the open records exception was particularly needed for commercial projects being developed at the MU's nuclear reactor. The provision was crafted in conjunction with the Missouri Press Association.
Mizzou Advantage moving toward action

By Janese Heavin

Wednesday, May 12, 2010

The University of Missouri's "Mizzou Advantage" initiative is starting to become more than just a catchy phrase.

Administrators have secured a $6 million annual budget for the program, hired a grant writer, created an event coordinator position, doled out nearly $1 million in grants and begun forming networks of faculty members who will cross disciplines to solve real-world problems.

Plans are in the works to award an additional $1.5 million in grants this fall, hire new faculty members with expertise related to the projects and develop new courses to better prepare students for an ever-changing world.

“What's the goal of all this?” Provost Brian Foster asked. “First, we want to greatly enhance the national and international reputation of Mizzou. ... We want to shake the Earth, OK? That's the goal.”

Foster has been formulating the Mizzou Advantage plan for three years, and yesterday he introduced it to about 150 university and community members at a reception at the Reynolds Alumni Center on campus. The initiative aims to cross-pollinate MU's strongest academic areas to better study food, health, energy, media and technology.

A facilitator has been hired to coordinate each of the five key areas. All five facilitators admitted it's early in the process, but they shared enthusiasm for the possibilities.

“I've never been involved with something where everybody comes to the table with such enthusiasm,” said Jo Britt-Rankin, who was tapped to lead the Food for the Future initiative.

Charles Davis, an associate professor at the Missouri School of Journalism and the executive director for the National Freedom of Information Coalition, is overseeing Media of the Future.

Davis said he sees the initiative as a way to find opportunities amid the chaos of a changing news world.

“This is smart,” he said. “This is the smartest thing I've heard in a while.”
LuAnne Roth, an English instructor, has been tapped to be the education coordinator for Mizzou Advantage. Her role includes developing new certificate programs that add specialty studies to a traditional major. Roth also envisions creating team-taught interdisciplinary courses.

Mizzou Advantage’s $6 million budget is composed of operating funds that have been reallocated from budgets of participating departments, MU spokeswoman Mary Jo Banken said. Some of that money will be spent on stipends to allow students to attend conferences and events. Additionally, stipends will be offered to faculty members willing to develop new, interdisciplinary courses.

The budget also will allow the university to bring distinguished scholars to campus for lectures and other events. That aspect of Mizzou Advantage is being led by former MU Chancellor Richard Wallace and should help draw thousands of visitors to town, Foster said.

Chancellor Brady Deaton also is expected to commit money from the Chancellor’s Fund for Excellence to help hire 25 new faculty members in the coming years and to provide additional grant money for projects. That fund is made up of donations given to MU without any stipulations on how the money is used.

If successful, Mizzou Advantage will “position us to be very competitive with the very best,” Foster said. “The big news is we’re actually moving forward with rolling out Mizzou Advantage.”

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James Devine, associate dean for academic affairs and longtime professor at the University of Missouri’s School of Law died of a heart attack Wednesday.

Devine was attending a Boone County Bar Association luncheon at the Tiger Hotel, where he was supposed to pay tribute to adjunct professor Ron Smull, bar member Steve Scott said. Smull has terminal cancer and had taught his last class at MU a couple of weeks ago, Scott said.

Scott said about 11:40 a.m., before lunch being served, someone called out to get a doctor after Devine collapsed to the floor. Members of the bar association trained in CPR attempted to revive him before emergency crews got there. Devine was taken to University Hospital.

Hospital spokeswoman Mary Jenkins confirmed that Devine had died but said she could not provide further details.

Law school Dean Larry Dessem released a statement saying it wasn’t unexpected that Devine was with fellow lawyers and faculty right before his passing.
“Also not unexpectedly, my last conversation with him had been about our students, for whom he cared so deeply and to whom he devoted his life and professional career,” Dessem said in the statement.

Scott said Devine was well-known and well-liked.

“He was a great guy, easy to get along with, always smiling,” he said. “He was fun to be around.”

Funeral service information is pending. Devine is survived by his wife, Sharon, and three sons, Zach, Josh and Noah.

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James Devine, a dean at MU School of Law, dies at 62

By Darren Orf
May 12, 2010 | 5:30 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — James Devine, associate dean of academic affairs at MU School of Law, died earlier today from a heart attack. Devine, 62, collapsed at approximately 11:40 a.m. during a meeting of the Boone County Bar Association at Tiger Hotel. The meeting was immediately canceled and paramedics spent roughly 25 minutes working on Devine in the hotel ballroom before sending him to University Hospital.

His death was unexpected; more than 20 attorneys rushed to dial 911 after Devine’s collapse. Boone County Bar Association member Steve Scott was present at the meeting. He knew Devine through the association and is also a fellow alum of the MU law school.

“He was supposed to give a tribute to Ron Smull at the meeting,” Scott says. “He was just a nice and pleasant person.”

According to the MU Law School website, Devine joined the faculty in 1980. He practiced law in New Jersey for four years prior to coming to MU and has published several works on legal ethics.

Jill Jackson, a former student of Devine, remembers his love for teaching. “He had a great sense of humor,” Jackson said. “He wanted to make sure every student was doing their best.”

Jackson, who is also a member of the Boone County Bar Association, was also present at the meeting.

“I spoke with him before we went into the meeting,” Jackson said. “He seemed fine and in a really good mood. He was just professor Devine.”
Lawrence Dessem, dean and professor of law at MU, published a statement saying, "my last conversation with him had been about our students — for whom he cared so deeply and to whom he devoted his life and professional career."

Devine's sudden death has left the law school and attorneys throughout Columbia in mourning.

"His death is a huge loss for the law school and the local community," Jackson said. "I can't say enough about what a wonderful person he was."

Devine is survived by his wife, Sharon; his three sons, Zach, Josh and Noah; and the lasting impression on his students.
MU terminal designs soar

Plans for airport provide real test.

By Daniel Cailler

Wednesday, May 12, 2010

For 10 minutes, as she explained her designs for a new Columbia Regional Airport terminal, University of Missouri senior Alissa Swilling had the full attention of Public Works Director John Glascock as well as airport board members John Riddick and Leon Hoffsette.

No, Swilling didn’t just land the biggest job of her career; rather, she was one of 18 MU architecture students who presented their capstone projects in an open house-style format yesterday afternoon.

“I wanted to separate the spaces,” Swilling, 24, said of her design concept as her hands panned across renderings of a bifurcated terminal, its service building and departure gates divided by a cozy courtyard. “Traveling is very stressful.”

One year ago, airport board Chairman Greg Cecil contacted the architectural design class to propose an idea: Give the students a chance to tackle a real-world project while giving airport board members a starting point for possible future improvements to the terminal.

“If we had hired a design company, we might have gotten one or two designs,” Cecil said. “This is what having a university in your community is all about.”

Twenty-one-year-old Anna Droste’s design combined themes of architect Santiago Calatrava’s Alamillo Bridge in Spain with Washington Dulles International Airport in Chantilly, Va.

Droste said the hardest part for her wasn’t so much the design of the terminal but researching other terminals as a starting point. “Trying to find a floor plan of an airport is pretty much impossible,” she said.

Glascock, who took notes as he perused the presentations, said they were “very dynamic, things you would never have dreamed of,” adding that many had good possibilities from a design standpoint.

There is no funding for a new terminal right now, though, with improvements to the airport runway on the horizon as well as the recent weaning from the federally funded Essential Air Service Program, airport board members and city staff are looking to the future with optimism.
All of the student projects represented two semesters of research and execution. Students met twice a week for four hours in a studio-style class led by professor of architecture studies Benyamin Schwarz.

Schwarz said the projects were technically difficult in that students not only had a limited space to work with — namely the site of the existing passenger terminal — but they had to adhere to the demands of a very sophisticated structure, considering things such as the flow of passengers, security checkpoints and all the goings-on of a busy terminal.

“I try to bring” the students “projects in the real world. It’s learning by doing, and you grow as you work through the process. That’s the secret of studio,” Schwarz said.

Cecil was pleased and impressed with the results.

“What a great way to highlight the skills of these students and have them do something that’s productive for the community,” he said. “I’m really excited about that.”

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Hormone therapies linked to metastasis

COLUMBIA, Mo., May 13 (UPI) -- U.S. researchers say animal models indicate hormone therapies may increase the chance of breast cancer metastasis.

Researchers at the University of Missouri in Columbia said metastasis -- the spreading of cancer beyond the lymph nodes -- was more likely when taking the hormone progestin. Progestin is a hormone used to counteract the potentially negative effects of estrogen therapy.

"In our study, we found that progestins increase the number of blood vessels that are responsible for transporting existing cancer cells," Salman Hyder says in a statement. "The more the blood vessels increase, the higher the chance of cancer cell metastasizing."

Hyder says the negative effect of progestins was worse in the absence of a protein that suppresses tumors called P53.

The researchers tested several different progestins on breast cancer tumors in an animal model. They found all types acted similarly to increase the likelihood of cancer spread.

Hyder's study has been accepted for publication in Menopause: The Journal of The North American Menopause Society.
Missouri grad students win NASA prize

By: The Associated Press | 13 May 2010 | 05:03 AM ET

COLUMBIA, Mo. - A pair of University of Missouri graduate students have won a $20,000 prize from NASA for designing an innovative surgical device they hope to commercialize.

The recipients are second-year business student Xandra Sifuentes and mechanical engineering doctoral student Brad Snow.

Sifuentes and Snow won the federal space agency's Earth/Space Engineering Innovation award at a recent Rice University competition in Houston.

The award honors student innovations that can be used in both the NASA space program and in the landlocked business world.

Snow and Sifuentes designed a laparoscopic medical device and plan to use the prize money to develop a prototype and launch a business.

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COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Missouri football team tracks racy words on social networks

MU Mention on Pg. 2

By Alex Ruppenthal
May 13, 2010 | 12:01 a.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — It took a team of computer programmers and a year and a half of testing for Kevin Long to get his brainchild on the market.

But the gist of his patented and technologically sophisticated service, one that might eventually be in the hands of every college athletics department in the country, came from a much less likely source: A college fraternity.

Long, 39, asked a group of students from his college fraternity, Alpha Kappa Lambda at Purdue University, to come up with a list of racy words used by college-aged students.

College athletics departments or teams that buy Long’s service – called UDiligence – receive e-mail notifications when any of the words show up on one of their athletes’ Facebook, Twitter or MySpace pages.

Long asks the group to review and update the list at least once each semester. Now, after starting in 2008, it consists of 414 words.

The Missourian cannot print many of the tracked words because they are vulgar. A sampling of the milder words: alcohol, cocaine, cracker, beer, blitzed, doobie, Budweiser, inject, gangster, chains, drunk, gun, condoms, redneck, Jack Daniels, weed, pimp.

Some of the words are misspellings. In addition to explosion, for example, the list includes xploshun and exploshun. So maybe you can’t spell. Or maybe you’re smart enough to misspell a word on purpose. Either way, you’re screwed, which is also on the list.
Other words are obscure, requiring a trip to a site such as UrbanDictionary.com for a definition.

The words are grouped into five categories: alcohol, drugs, sex, violence and general/racial, which includes profane words.

Long also offers a similar service called YouDiligence, designed for parents to keep track of their children's social networking. It has an additional category named depression/bullying.

Missouri's football team was one of UDiligence's first clients. The team pays about $1,500 a year for the service, which Long said is the only one of its kind.

**Dan Hopkins, Missouri's director of football operations, receives about five to 10 e-mails a day from UDiligence notifying him that one of the search words has been found on a social network page belonging to a Missouri football player.**

The notification also provides context and a link to the spot on the page where the word appeared. Hopkins can determine whether the flagged word was used inappropriately.

Hopkins would not discuss whether the team has disciplined a player for behavior on social networking sites or how the team would punish a player.

Long said a school has never asked him how UDiligence comes up with the list of words, which can be adjusted by someone such as Hopkins if he wants to add or delete words.

Based on UDiligence's growing list of clients, several dozen schools including six from the Big 12 and several others from the six Bowl Championship Series conferences, the company picked the right dirty word experts.

"I remember what I was like when I was a college student in the fraternity, and if there was ever a group of people that would use this type of language and be familiar with what it was, I figured they were a very good select focus group that we could use to define this stuff in the beginning," Long said. "It seems to have worked out pretty well so far."