A pipe dream

The governor on higher education

By Henry J. Waters III

Tuesday, September 7, 2010

Not long ago Gov. Jay Nixon told higher education leaders he wants them to handle increased enrollments even though they can’t expect more state money. In fact, he called for disproportionately higher enrollments to increase the percentage of Missourians with college degrees from 37 to 60 percent by 2025.

To achieve this magic he wants colleges to collaborate more effectively, eliminating course duplication and, theoretically, enlarging their effective overall capacity.

Somebody behind the curtain in Washington came up with the 60 percent goal, targeted for achievement by 2025. In Missouri that means a mere 461,886 more students will have to get degrees while state financial support weakens and student “affordability” remains a top priority.

This is a ridiculous concoction of dreamy ideas, of course. Nothing short of a massive infusion of public money coupled with a hearty reduction in student eligibility standards would conceivably bring any such result.

Meanwhile, the governor does not yet know whether in the next legislative session he will decouple state appropriations from allowable tuition hikes at public colleges and universities, a deal in effect in recent years. Nixon accurately noted this arrangement can’t go on forever. He is right, particularly if he anticipates weak appropriations and increasing enrollments.

In fact, tuition coupling is an insignificant factor, more of a political statement than a higher education affordability policy. Allowing institutions to raise tuitions does not necessarily affect affordability for most needy students, who benefit from individually tailored student aid programs. If the state wants to enhance affordability, it should increase scholarship funding for eligible students and families.

Allowing higher tuitions is a way to get more affluent students to help subsidize others.

Nixon also urged colleges to offer courses germane to job opportunities. One wonders what else the institutions are doing now. Supply and demand for various courses determine curricula. This sort of customer preference presumably is the best indicator for course catalogs.
For some time I have thought it might be more important to emphasize educational quality through high school rather than concentrate on how many enter college. If every high school graduate were academically equipped to go to college, moving beyond high school would be the entire issue. As it is, if every high school graduate were so equipped, the achievement level of Americans would be vastly improved whether college enrollments grew or not.

Of course, they would grow, but for real reason, not just because politicians call for them to do so.

If we want 60 percent of the population to graduate from college, we’ll have to develop a form of conscription putting the Army’s to shame. A college draft — great idea.

HJW III

Those who gossip to you about others

will gossip to others about you.
Dental sealants expose kids to BPA

Study says exposure lasts up to three hours

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- Caleb Hellerman

http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/3032619/

(CNN) - Dental sealants expose tens of millions of American children to the controversial chemical BPA, according to a new paper in the journal Pediatrics. It says that sealants contain derivatives of BPA, which metabolize to actual BPA when exposed to saliva. The exposure lasts up to three hours after the sealant is applied.

Sealants came into widespread use in the 1990s. The American Dental Association and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend them as an important way to prevent tooth and gum decay. A host of health problems are associated with decay. Dr. Philip Landrigan, one of the paper’s authors, agrees that those benefits outweigh the risk from BPA, but warns that doesn’t mean the chemical is safe.

“It is absolutely clear that bisphenol-A is a toxic chemical and an endocrine disruptor. We know this from studies in humans, and in animals,” says Landrigan, a pediatrician at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine who has spent decades studying the effects of chemicals on children.

BPA is used in many plastics and also widely used in the lining of metal cans. It has been under scrutiny for possible links to a variety of health problems, including heart disease in adults and developmental problems in young children. Because it mimics the hormone estrogen, some physicians say it can cause disruption at very small doses. Dr. Abby Fleisch of Children’s Hospital in Boston, the lead author of the Pediatrics paper, says it’s unclear how much BPA children generally absorb from the sealants.
Landrigan says the amount is likely “pretty small,” but adds, “We hope that the publication of this article will stimulate manufacturers of these products to make safer products. We want to create attention, so parents start shopping for products without those chemicals.”

The paper also urges pregnant women to minimize their exposure. Both the American Society for Reproductive Medicine, a group of OB-GYNs, and the American Dental Association (ADA) say they currently make no recommendation on sealants.

Dr. Leslie Seldin, a second-generation dentist and spokesman for the ADA, said the group does not consider BPA from sealants to be a hazard. “What we found is that it can be controlled, it’s very minimal and it doesn’t pose any risk to anybody,” Seldin said. Precautions include temporarily blocking off the sealed area with a rubber dental dam, rinsing the mouth with water or saline solution and using a mild abrasive to grind off excess material.

Other dentists agree. Dr. Joel Berg, chair of Pediatric Dentistry at the University of Washington, strongly believes sealants are safe and effective. "There's more estrogen in a mother's kiss than there is in a sealant," he says.

Frederick vom Saal, a biologist at the University of Missouri and a well-known critic of BPA, sees it differently. “This story should have been written ten years ago,” he told CNN. “No pregnant women should have a sealant put on their teeth. And your baby does not have a liver that can metabolize [BPA] adequately.”

Vom Saal says parents are in a tough position, one he wrestled with when his own daughter had some tooth decay. In the end, he had her dentist apply the sealant.
Alden Goes Beyond "No Further Comments" on Washington

Missouri athletic director Mike Alden, during an appearance on WHB radio in Kansas City on Tuesday afternoon took a giant leap beyond the “no further comments” stance the University announced after confirming the “permanent suspension” of starting tailback Derrick Washington on Sept. 1.

“I don’t know that if you necessarily,” Alden began, then hesitated in responding to a question about Missouri acting prior to a class C felony charge of deviate sexual assault could be adjudicated.

“You want to answer from a standpoint of, you know, our focus is always going to be on making sure that at the University of Missouri we’re doing the right things in the right way with the right values in place.

“And that we recognize that playing sport in college is certainly a privilege, not a right to be able to do that. And so, with that being said, decisions in and around our program are always going to be done with the best intentions of our institution, No. 1.

“And so those are the types of processes that we go through. We’ve never made ‘em public and we’ll never make ‘em public. Certainly, any actions that we take, that’s something we’ve done internally, which we have in this case. But its something that’s been unfortunate, it’s been challenging, but that we’ve made those decisions and we’re moving forward from that.

“But its always going to be done focusing on the values of our institution.”

Host Kevin Keitzman then asked Alden if it was safe to assume that Alden and Coach Gary Pinkel and the staff knew “more than we do.”

“We always are communicating at a very good and a very high level,” Alden said. “So it would be certainly safe to say that hopefully we have a good handle on everything that’s going on around our program and a lot of stuff that we’ll know about will be things that aren’t necessarily played out in public.”

Alden’s comments were certainly more expansive than was his answer to a question put to him by The Star on Saturday following Missouri’s 23-13 victory over Illinois in the Tigers’ football season opener.
Asked if the decision to “permanently suspend” Washington was a decision made above the level of Missouri Coach Gary Pinkel, Alden told The Star: “We’re not going to talk about that. That issue’s over for us.”

Earlier on Saturday, Missouri system president Gary Forsee told The Star of his and MU chancellor Brady Deaton’s roles in the Washington decision: “We’re there for wisdom and advice. But that’s a coach’s decision.”

Deaton said: “That’s right. We’ve very supportive of that decision.”

On Sept. 1, following a question that day from The Star concerning whether Washington had been removed from the football program, MU issued the following statement:

“Derrick Washington has been permanently suspended from the University of Missouri football program. Nothing about this decision will affect his existing athletic scholarship as long as he remains enrolled at Mizzou. The University will have no further comments on the topic.”
Some rankings that matter

By Janese Silvey

Posted August 27, 2010 at 2:38 p.m.

The Chronicle of Higher Education released its annual Almanac Issue today, a magazine that lists the Top 100 public and private universities in a number of different categories.

MU landed on several lists:

- Mizzou is 77th out of 100 of the top institutions in total research and development expenditures for science and engineering for FY 2008. MU spent $244,639,000, according to the National Science Foundation. The top school was Johns Hopkins University with more than $1.68 billion.
- MU took the 95th spot in the Top 100 institutions in federal research and development expenditures for science and engineering for that same year with $108,131,000. Again, Johns Hopkins landed at the top with $1.425 billion.
- The UM System has one of the largest endowments per student. The total endowment, according to the National Association of College and University Business Offices, for the system is $881,845,772, meaning the endowment per student was $17,283. That's based on 2009 numbers.
- MU came in at 45 for campuses with the largest enrollments for the Fall 2008 semester with 27,235 students. The University of Phoenix, an online network, topped the list with 301,323 students. Arizona State came in second with 57,636.
- Mizzou was the 86th campus enrolling the most foreign students in 2008-09. MU had 1,800 international students that year compared to the 7,482 that made the University of Southern California No. 1.

Speaking of rankings, I owe an apology to my alma mater. In my last blog entry, I stated that Truman State did not appear No. 1 on any U.S. News & World Report list, rather it was the first public school on a list that ranked it 8th.

Truman is, indeed, No. 1 on a list that separates public schools.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

City Council changes Maryland Avenue to Tiger Avenue

By Mary Daly
September 8, 2010 | 12:01 a.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — At a meeting that stretched for more than four hours, the Columbia City Council tackled various issues, including funding for city projects and renaming a prominent street running through MU.

Maryland Avenue renamed Tiger Avenue

City Council members voted unanimously in favor of renaming Maryland Avenue to Tiger Avenue, affecting 10 properties on the street. University Affairs director Ana Romero said it would be beneficial for the university to have its main thoroughfare reflect school spirit. The only concern was there would be confusion between Tiger Avenue and the existing Tiger Lane, located off of Worley and Bernadette streets. City Manager Bill Watkins said because address numbers are in different ranges on each street, it would “make any kind of mix up very rare.”

Shuttle service added to Prunty Hall

The council also unanimously approved an amendment to the agreement between the UM System Board of Curators and the city, adding a shuttle bus between MU and Prunty Hall at Stephens College for MU students living in that residence hall during the fall semester.
First women’s and children’s hospital in Missouri to open Thursday

By Jing Zhao
September 7, 2010 | 8:36 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA - What's billed as the first women's and children's hospital in Missouri is preparing for its grand opening and public tours Thursday.

The University of Missouri Women's and Children's Hospital, formerly Columbia Regional Hospital, plans to showcase its consolidated services and renovations with a ribbon-cutting Thursday and public tours from 2 to 4 p.m. Sunday at 404 Keene St.

MU Health Care had invested approximately $14.3 million in renovations to MU Women's and Children's Hospital. Included in that total is $12 million for the consolidation of Children's Hospital services under one roof at MU Women's and Children's Hospital and $2.3 million in renovations and improvements to the Women's Health Center.

"Children's hospital attracts patients from every county in Missouri," Matt Splett, media coordinator for MU Health Care, said. "This new location is going to be very beneficial to our patients."

Women's services have existed at Columbia Regional Hospital for years, but children's medical services provided by MU Health Care have been in different locations: pediatric and adolescent inpatients at University Hospital, neonatal intensive care unit and pediatric transport at Columbia Regional, and pediatric outpatient clinics at various locations around Columbia.

All of those services will be housed at the new women's and children's hospital.

"We want to create a hospital in mid-Missouri that serves women and children in one convenient location," Splett said.
The new hospital will feature private rooms for children, and kid-friendly decor welcomes patients in the new lobby.

A clinic devoted to maternal-fetal medicine has been remodeled and expanded to better serve women with high-risk pregnancies.

Thirteen new pediatric specialists will be added to the Department of Child Health in the final six months of 2010. These specialists will bring medical expertise in such areas as pediatric cardiology, pulmonology, endocrinology/diabetes and additional pediatric services. There also will be three new physicians added to the women’s services.