More diversity sought on UM curators board

By Janese Silvey

Thursday, November 4, 2010

Three University of Missouri curators' terms are expiring soon, and MU leaders are asking for replacements that aren't so, well, white.

The nine-member board now consists of eight men and one woman. When Gov. Jay Nixon appointed two new members — David Bradley and Wayne Goode — last year, it marked the first time in years the board lacked a minority curator.

During a town hall forum with UM System President Gary Forsee yesterday on the MU campus, associate English Professor April Langley urged him to keep diversity of staff and students a priority as the system faces budget and enrollment pressures.

"Diversity and inclusiveness are key parts of what we're about as an institution," Forsee responded. "It has to be a part of the fabric and foundation of what we do."

But that should extend to the Board of Curators, too, said Elizabeth Cogswell, director of development in the Corporate and Foundation Relations department. She asked Forsee to encourage Gov. Jay Nixon to keep diversity a priority when selecting new curators next year.

The terms of Curators David Wasinger of St. Louis, Doug Russell of Lebanon and John Carnahan III of Springfield will technically end Jan. 1, but they will continue to serve until Nixon appoints new members. And that could take months: Last year, Nixon waited until July to replace curators whose terms expired Jan. 1, 2009.

Some curators have been reappointed to multiple terms in the past, but two members retiring from the board say they have no interest in another term. Wasinger said he has two young sons and a vibrant law practice that need his attention. Russel also said he's not interested in reappointment. Carnahan did not return Tribune requests for comment.

The Board of Curators must, by law, include Democrats and Republicans. A member is selected from each of Missouri's nine congressional districts. Because they come from different geographic backgrounds, Russell said, the board is already diverse. But, he added, "minority representation adds to the diversity of the board. A diverse board is a better board."
The makeup of the system’s governing board also could affect future grant funding. Roger Worthington, MU’s chief diversity officer, told Forsee yesterday agencies could pass up MU applications if diversity isn’t reflected at all levels of leadership.

Forsee repeatedly stressed that it’s the governor’s responsibility to appoint curators. Still, he seems to be playing a more aggressive role in the process than in past years. The UM System printed a pamphlet last week outlining curator candidate qualifications, something not done in the past.

Curators should be committed to public education, according to the guidelines, should have a record of community service and should have a working knowledge of complex organizations and academic institutions. The board as a whole should be diverse ethnically and in gender, and curators should bring different professional backgrounds, the brochure says.

Forsee also said after yesterday’s meeting that, while he’s not recruiting curator candidates, he would be willing to make suggestions.

Nixon’s spokesman, Scott Holste, said the governor has some candidates in mind. “These are important times for higher education, and ... the curator positions are key appointments,” Holste said in an e-mail. “The governor is certainly aware of the terms of the current board, and he is considering several well-qualified candidates.”

Reach Janese Silvey at 573-815-1705 or e-mail jsilvey@columbiatribune.com.
Rolla, Mo. — A decision may not be coming as soon as University of Missouri System President Gary Forsee wanted on employee retirement benefits, after saying he would not push a plan before it was ready.

After meeting with the UM Board of Curators to discuss reconfiguring the pension earlier in the week, Forsee spoke at Missouri S&T on Tuesday to clarify what was happening with the plan.

"There is no plan to make any change," Forsee said during his discussion.

The System has been discussing a possible change in its benefits plan for the past year.

It has pitted the possibility of keeping the current defined benefits plan, which guarantees benefits, against a defined contribution plan, which secures how much employers pay.

Curators were presented with the first potential model for a defined contribution plan from consulting firm Tower Watson during Monday’s meeting.

The plan would require the System to contribute 5 percent of an employee's salary, with a possible 200 percent match on 2 percent of pay if an employee contributes additional funds. Hourly wage employees would pay 1 percent of their salary, while professional employees would contribute 2 percent. All employees would need to stay three years to be fully invested.

Employees were required to pay into the plan for the first time in the past two years.

Any change would not impact current employees, but only apply to future hires.
Tuition increase certain

Officials say they will be forced to raise prices

By Adam Van Hart

The Rolla Daily News

Posted Nov 04, 2010 @ 01:46 PM

Rolla, Mo. — University of Missouri System President Gary Forsee reiterated Tuesday that students can expect to see tuition increases next year.

Speaking at Missouri S&T, Forsee laid out of what he believes will be a substantial cut in state funding and the need for increases to avoid taking "draconian" measures.

Forsee's plan also puts to rest any hope the two-year trend of holding down some tuitions could continue.

In-state undergraduates, who have been held harmless the past two school years, will be getting a bump in their costs, something other students are already saw.

After receiving a 5.2 percent cut in state funding, the System Board of Curators approved increases for out-of-state and graduate students for this school year. Those raises were in addition to fee increases all students experienced.

University officials are already predicting the state will trim between 10 and 15 percent of its budget.

Forsee added that the System wants to free itself from the limitations state law imposes on universities when it comes to tuition hikes.

Under Missouri law, tuition can not grow beyond the Consumer Price Index, the rate of inflation. To do so, the System will need state approval.

On Oct. 15, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported the CPI increased 1.1 percent during the past year.
Tuition increase could affect faculty salaries

A tuition increase for the 2012 academic year could be used to pay professors more.

By Marig Mandelberg

Published Nov. 5, 2010

MU professors receive the lowest salaries of any school in the Association of American Universities, said Betsy Rodriguez, UM system vice president of human resources.

"We did no salary increase this year, thinking that most people would do the same and we might move up slightly," Rodriguez said in a Board of Curators meeting Monday. "But in fact, many of the AAU institutions did do a moderate salary increase, and we are definitely still at the bottom of that group."

Missouri Students Association President Tim Noce said low salaries affect the happiness of professors, which has a direct impact on how students are educated.

"I'm not going to say every professor bases how they educate with how they get paid, but that is an underlying factor," Noce said. "That will help us get some of the better faculty members, if you pay them a competitive salary."

Benefit packages for professors are also lacking.

"Our benefits are average," Rodriguez said. "They are not high, and I think there was a misperception for a while there that our benefits were better than average. But in terms of our peers and in terms of the value of our benefits, we are average."

There might be a solution to the low salary and mediocre benefits given to professors, though it is unpopular with students — the possibility of a tuition increase.

UM system President Gary Forsee held a town hall meeting Wednesday and explained the in-state tuition increase set for the 2012 academic year.

"The last two years, we've held the in-state undergraduate tuition flat in order to send a message to parents and students that we get it, we understand the pressure that you're under," Forsee said. "But we've also sent a very clear message for the fiscal year 2012 that there will be a tuition increase beyond that core inflationary index."

Forsee said the UM system's main goal is to provide accessible and affordable higher education across the state, and even with this tuition increase, that goal will remain at the top of its list.
Obviously we have to keep in balance this issue, accessibility and affordability, but we will be going forward for the first time in three years with that tuition increase,” Forsee said.

Noce said he expects many students to have a negative reaction when the tuition goes up in two years.

“We haven’t had an increase in tuition in a long time, but some students are going to be pretty irritated,” Noce said. “Other students are going to think it’s natural progression. Inflation has gone up, but tuition hasn’t.”

Noce said even though this decision could increase the burden on students and their families, the money could end up helping to increase professor salaries.

“If you increase tuition, that money will go to the university,” Noce said. “It will fill the gap from that money we’re losing. That would allow for possible professors to get a raise, and that could help education.”

Noce said students might be in favor of tuition increases if the result of those increases means more resources for them.

“If the student is getting a few more resources, they may be willing to pay a few extra dollars,” Noce said. “I think students would be more than willing to accept that if they were seeing those resources put before them in a timely manner.”
Four more teachers added their names to a lawsuit filed in August against the Missouri Board of Education and three other entities for breach of contract. A total of 45 teachers lost their jobs last fall when the state cut funding for the Missouri Virtual Instruction Program, which offers online courses, and 18 of those teachers are now plaintiffs in the suit.

"I decided to get involved with the lawsuit because I felt like the more I learned about what MoVIP actually knew versus what they told us they knew, it just didn’t seem to match up," said Leslie Salley, a teacher recently added to the list of plaintiffs.

Salley left her job as a high school English teacher to work for MoVIP and said several other teachers were in the same boat.

"It’s infuriating as a teacher who left a position to do this new job to find out that people knew it might not last the full year," she said.

According to the suit, the teachers’ contracts guaranteed them positions with MoVIP for a full year. But after only three months, they were informed they were out of jobs because of funding cuts.

"Some people knew it wouldn’t last, and if they told us upfront, I would have never left my position and my insurance and all those things I lost," Salley said.

Although she says officials from MoVIP who hired her were upfront about the fact that funding for the program might eventually be cut, she never imagined it would be so soon.

"They were pretty clear that the funding might not be around for years and years, but they were certain it’d be around the full year, and they never acted any different until it all started to crumble," she said.
MoVIP remains open as a tuition-based program run by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Salley said when the teachers learned they were losing their jobs, officials from MoVIP told them vendors might elect to hire some of the teachers. "I don’t know of anybody who was kept on by a vendor," she said. "It was just a shot in the dark that didn't materialize into a real possibility."

Attorney David Brown said he attempted settlements with all four entities involved in the suit — the state of Missouri, the curators of the University of Missouri, EMMITS National Center and the Missouri State Board of Education. Only the university formally responded to the settlement overture but did not express any interest in settling.

"In general, I can say if the teachers could receive the full year’s salary that they were due under the employment contract, I think that they wouldn’t be interested in suing for the misrepresentation claims," Brown said.

Brown said he sent the university a notice about the suit via mail in August, waiving the need to send a sheriff to formally serve the university. However, the university failed to respond, and a sheriff will formally serve them with the suit in upcoming weeks.

"I was surprised," Brown said of the university's failure to respond. "It’s possible that it’s because they’re busy or it’s an oversight on their part, but if they did it intentionally, that would be surprising."

The university declined to comment on the suit.

The next step, Brown says, will be for a judge to decide whether or not to look at the case as a class action.

"I would hope that we can get a ruling from the judge that will resolve the contract claim within the next six months," Brown said. "But if we’re going to continue to litigate the misrepresentation claims that could drag on for another year beyond that."

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Street art takes cozy turn with yarn bombing

By Trupti Rami
November 4, 2010 | 4:24 p.m. CDT

The Thomas Jefferson statue on Francis Quadrangle was wearing knitted leg warmers until they were removed Monday night. Melanie Lynch

COLUMBIA — Columbia’s streets are a little warmer these days, thanks to yarn bombing.

Colorful, knitted fabric has appeared on three parking meters on Ninth Street and on the Thomas Jefferson statue on Francis Quadrangle in the past few weeks.

Yarn bombing, or knit graffiti, is an international trend that takes street art to a new level. In countries such as Australia, Canada, the United States and many others, knitted and crocheted fabric has joined traditional spray painted murals and installations as street art, said Bex Oliger, co-owner of True Blue Fiber Friends, which has about 2,000 customers in mid-Missouri.

Social knitting groups have been talking about doing this in Columbia for years, Oliger said.
“Social groups have gone one step further here by actually covering things in yarn,” she said.

Last week was the first time Oliger has seen yarn bombing in Columbia. She suspects that younger knitters are responsible for the recent yarn bombing.

“There’s this stereotype that knitters are your grandmothers and aunts and not college students,” Oliger said.

Oliger said knitters “yarn bomb” for fun and to bring attention to the community and the art form.

“Somebody has too much yarn and too much time on their hands,” she jokingly said.

MU sophomore Becca Zurbrick passed the leg warmers on Thomas Jefferson on Monday while giving a campus tour to prospective students and their parents.

“My tour thought they were awesome,” Zurbrick said. “Strangely enough, I think it reflected well on the university. They found the act very fun-loving and creative.”

**Knitting vandals?**

The yarn bombing undoubtedly adds color to an otherwise muted cityscape, but is it vandalism?

Public Information Officer Jill Wieneke said no.

The knits would not be considered vandalism because they do not damage property, she said.

“Someone putting a scarf on a meter is not really important to us,” Wieneke said. “Our job is to respond to complaints.”

The knits are still hugging the parking meters, but the leg warmers were removed from the Thomas Jefferson statue Monday night.

While MU Campus Facilities did not take off the leg warmers, the department did plan on removing them after Homecoming weekend.
"We would never leave something like that up," MU spokesman Christian Basi said. "It wasn't a part of the artist's original work."

Wieneke said police would respond if businesses or community members complained. At most, violators would be issued a littering ticket, she said.

"It's not a high priority, but it is something we take care of," said Jill Stedem, Department of Public Works spokeswoman.

Columbia does not have a vandalism ordinance but does have property damage and littering ordinances.

For both first-degree and second-degree property damage, "A person commits the crime of property damage if he knowingly damages property of another."

The first part of the littering ordinance reads, "A person commits the crime of littering if he throws or places, or causes to be thrown or placed, any glass, glass bottles, wire, nails, tacks, hedge, cans, garbage, trash, refuse or rubbish of any kind, nature or description."

According to these ordinances, yarn bombing would be littering. The yarn is "tthrown" over an object and can be removed without damage to the property, Wieneke said.

Wieneke said the city would treat a toilet-papering incident in the same way.

Oliger is not sure where the knit graffiti will appear next. Knitting groups have discussed yarn bombing the MU Columns and downtown light posts in the past, she said.

"I've heard rumors that the quadrangle trees look cold," Oliger said.
Legislature decides new leadership

Southwest Missouri amply represented.

Roseann Moring • News-Leader • November 5, 2010

Missouri’s General Assembly leadership was decided Thursday, and southwest Missouri is in a good position, said Scott Marrs, a lobbyist whose firm represents Springfield, Greene County and Missouri State University.

"Being cut as little as possible is going to be a victory this year," Marrs said.

The state Senate elected Sen. Rob Mayer, R-Dexter, as its president pro tem. He had said he was asked by other conservative Republicans to challenge the front-runner, Kevin Engler of Farmington.

"We think it’s a good time to put forth a pro-job creation, pro-business agenda," Mayer said at a press conference Thursday.

Mayer’s election is seen as a shift to the right from the previous leadership of Charlie Shields, who left because of term limits.

"In recent years, the Senate has tended to act as a brake on the more aggressive policies promoted by House Republicans," said University of Missouri political science professor Peverill Squire. He said with the removal of those brakes, there will likely be more confrontation between the strongly Republican legislature and Gov. Jay Nixon, a Democrat.

For those who are tired of campaign commercials, don't get too comfortable.

"Of course, every action on each side will be interpreted in light of the 2012 gubernatorial election," he said.

Two southwest Missouri Republican senators were selected by their colleagues to serve in leadership positions: Jack Goodman of Mount Vernon as assistant majority leader and the newly elected Mike Parson of Bolivar as majority whip.
Marrs said he sees southwest Missouri's new Republican senatorial delegation -- Goodman, Parson, Bob Dixon of Springfield, Jay Wasson of Nixa and Ron Richard of Joplin -- exercising more clout under Mayer's leadership.

"The contingent for southwest Missouri is pretty darn strong," Marrs said. In a year where everyone is expecting budget cuts, that can make a huge difference for municipalities and other government-funded entities, he said. And House Speaker Steve Tilley has already nixed any new tax increases to help fill the projected $700 million budget deficit.

Marrs called the new Senate dynamic "intriguing. In a good way."

And Squire, the MU professor, said now is a good time for rural Missouri.

"Conservative rural voices will carry a great deal of weight in Jefferson City over the next two years," he said.

Sen. Tom Dempsey, R-St. Charles, will move into Engler's old spot of majority leader and Victor Callahan of Independence will continue to lead the Senate Democrats.

Rep. Mike Talboy, D-Kansas City, was elected to lead House Democrats on Thursday. Springfield Rep. Sara Lampe was re-elected to the spot of caucus secretary.

Willard Republican Shane Schoeller was elected as House Speaker pro tem on Wednesday.
Faculty consider new take on diversity course

Any class in the Multicultural Certificate Program would qualify under the proposal.

By Jimmy Hibsch

A proposed approach to address the diversity requirement from the General Education review committee was met with the disdain by several members of the Faculty Council at Thursday's meeting.

"Because we are in a global world and a global society, it is important for students to be more familiar with different kinds of cultures and backgrounds," said Victoria Johnson, M.U. American Association of University Professors vice president and presenter of the committee's findings.

In what Johnson originally said she thought was a clever way to approach the requirement, the committee suggested requiring one of the General Education courses to be listed in the Multicultural Certificate Program. Hundreds of courses fall under the certificate program, from Cross-Cultural Journalism to Stress in Families. Johnson later said the high number of courses could be a cause for question.

"Personally, I'm a little concerned because it's almost anything and everything," Johnson said. "I'd rather see it a little more subordinate to society."

Black Studies program assistant director April Langley took offense to the committee's proposal, claiming it completely opposes the initial mission of the diversity course initiative.

"This is problematic on multiple levels," Langley said. "It seems in some ways that it is apathetic to the statement and the mission on the university's commitment to diversity."

Instead of being a diversity requirement, the committee's idea would be referred to as a world cultures requirement. This could potentially cause another problem, Faculty Council Chairwoman Leona Rubin said.

"What if a Korean student, for example, decides to take Korean Cultures?" Rubin said. "There's absolutely no expansion of their cultural horizons."

A class teaching cultural issues would not prevent issues such as last year's cotton ball incident, Langley said. She said this is why a class centered about diversity is crucial.

"The list of Multicultural Certificate courses is so general that you can almost take 'dancing on one leg' and you could get your diversity requirement complete," Langley said. "The point of this was precisely to expose our students, to equip them and prepare them to engage in a world
that is vast and that considers a vast number of cultures and of contexts. This will not educate our
students on honor and respect.”

Langley tossed around the possibility of creating a specific course to address the intended
purpose of the diversity course requirement and said she would be more than willing to look at
ways this could be composed.

“‘We really need to slow down and look at this very carefully,’” Langley said. “‘That’s if we want
to stay true to the stated mission and the commitment of the university.’”

She added MU already has several courses that could satisfy an acceptable course requirement.

“It’s not as difficult as you may think, and there are courses that we already teach that can do
this,’” Langley said. “‘We need to identify those. We don’t have a multicultural or world culture
mission statement. We have a diversity mission statement.’”

Rubin said she would be willing to help Langley identify these courses and also that though
nothing is finalized, she isn’t confident the committee’s proposal would quench MU’s thirst for a
diversity course.

“It’s certainly going to take a lot more discussion then just taking this big pack of courses and
saying, ‘This works,’” Rubin said.

The committee will continue its discussion on this issue at its next meeting.
Letter to the Editor: MU should implement market for parking spots, courses

By Abhi Sivasailam, senior. assgf3@mail.mizzou.edu  Published Nov. 5, 2010

Of the set of possible ways to allocate resources, markets tend do so in ways that are most efficient. By allowing individuals to communicate value using the language of prices, markets generally help to drive resources to their highest-valued uses. As such, economists advise that scarce resources be allocated through market-means and not through cruder means like first-come, first-served. Given this, it is surprising that the University of Missouri — and universities across the nation — have not embraced markets as an efficient tool for allocating the scarce resources at their disposal. Let us consider two of the scarce resources that most affect students: parking spots and courses.

Both parking spots and courses at this university are allocated by a mix of first-come, first-served and seniority. The task of designing rules for allocating these resources is not an easy one; every possible rule for allocation will create a unique set of winners and losers. The benefit of market-based rules relative to rules like first-come, first-served need not be that the former produces fewer losers, only that it optimizes wealth by expanding the total amount of welfare that individuals can enjoy. Speaking anecdotally, the rules for allocation that this university has selected for these two resources have generated much criticism from students. Preferably, market-based rule for allocation could be based on opening up both resources to auctions. For parking, Parking and Transportation Services could establish minimum opening bids for various spots on campus based on expected popularity and then allow students to simply bid for the prices they are willing to pay. The result is that the scarce resource will tend to flow to its highest valued uses. Some students may object that this tilts the distribution of parking spots to favor the wealthy. These students have a point, though students with more modest means stand to gain from the market structure as well. Presumably, the more intense bidding of the most-valued spots will crowd out bidding for less-valued spots and these spots will consequently become cheaper. Students with fewer means may end up with worse spots, but these spots will likely be much cheaper. On net, we would expect the total social welfare that students share to expand.

For courses, this university could trade the effective tuition dollars that students pay with Tiger Dollars, which can only be used to bid on courses. Under this system, all individuals could be limited to the same amount of wealth with which to bid. If a student intensely values Economics 1014 (as all students should) then that student can use a larger portion of her Tiger Dollars to bid for that class. In this way, the scarce resource of courses naturally flows to its highest valued uses and, again, the total social welfare that students can enjoy expands.

The point of these examples is simple: when well-structured, markets work. The University of Missouri and its students would be better served if we used them more often.