The University of Missouri Extension in Columbia said Monday it plans to cut 19 jobs amid a drop in state funding.

MU Extension officials said they are making up to $2.7 million in budget cuts to prepare for an anticipated reduction in state money for higher education. Grants to the Extension from state agencies also have shrunk due to the state’s budget shortfalls.

Tom Henderson, former director of MU Extension and former assistant to the provost for economic development, will lead realignment of the Center for Distance and Independent Study and MU Direct, the university’s for-credit e-learning programs.

Mizzou’s public radio stations, KBIA, KKTR and KAUD, and the University Concert Series will transfer to MU’s Office of Administrative Services.

The Missouri Film Office, which contributes to Missouri’s economy by bringing filmmakers to the state, will join the Office of the vice provost for economic development.

The extension’s role in the statewide TeleCenter Network partnership will also end. TeleCenters are located in Mexico, Salem, Jefferson City, Nevada, Kirksville, Poplar Bluff, Portageville, Reeds Spring and Mineral Area.

These changes will result in a nearly 16 percent reduction in MU Extension’s budget, officials said.

The Extension’s current budget (FY 2011) is $98.2 million Changes based on the reorganization, general operating cuts and loss of state grant funding are estimated to total nearly $19 million for fiscal 2012, said Mary Jo Banken, a university spokeswoman. Since FY12 is still months away, Extension’s numbers are estimated using the best information we have right now which is based on the FY11 eLearning budgets, the loss of state grants reported to us thus far and a 10% reduction in state funding provided for general operations.

Since the e-learning programs that were previously under the Extension will be transferred to other MU campus administrative units, not all of the $19 million will be a reduction in total funds, Banken said.
The University of Missouri’s online and distance learning programs are being taken out from under the umbrella of MU Extension and put under the control of campus administration, MU officials said this afternoon.

The change will take effect Dec. 1 and will create a roughly 15.7 percent reduction in MU Extension’s budget, or about $2.7 million. The realignment is to offset an anticipated state reduction in the coming fiscal year, MU spokeswoman Mary Jo Banker said.

Tom Henderson, former director of MU Extension and former assistant to the provost for economic development, will lead the realignment of the Center for Distance and Independent Study and MU Direct.

The changes also mean MU will end its 15-year TeleCenter Network partnership and instead reinvest in new technologies.

Banker said 19 positions will be affected and those people will either be rehired for other MU Extension positions or laid off.

“In these difficult economic times, the University of Missouri continues to examine its programs, structure and operations in order to assure that all of its resources are used most efficiently,” Chancellor Brady Deaton said in a prepared statement. “MU Extension will continue its long history of providing local programs to Missouri’s citizens that help create healthier families, more businesses, better communities, stronger agriculture, and an overall better quality of life.”
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

MU Extension to cut positions, shuffle programs

By Michelle Markelz
November 8, 2010 | 8:14 p.m. CST

COLUMBIA — **MU Extension will reduce positions, transfer programs to other administrative offices and end its role in a distance learning partnership to save up to $2.7 million during the coming year.**

The move anticipates a reduction in state funding for higher education and reflects a loss of grants from state agencies.

The strategy includes:

- Ending MU Extension's 15-year association with the statewide TeleCenter Network partnership, which provides interactive distance learning centers in nine locations.
- Eliminating 19 TeleCenter positions funded by MU Extension.
- Transferring KBIA, KKTR and KAUD public radio stations and the University Concert Series to the MU Office of Administrative Services.
- Moving the Missouri Film Office to the Office of the Vice Provost for Economic Development.

According to a release from the MU News Bureau, MU Extension also enlisted the interim help of Tom Henderson in moving two online, for-credit programs, the Center for Distance and Independent Study and MU Direct, to new oversight. Henderson is a former director of MU Extension and a former assistant to the provost for economic development.

The moves will be effective Dec. 1.

Together, the efforts will result in reducing the MU Extension budget by nearly 20 percent, according to the release.

The changes allow it to "focus on core missions, including job growth and economic development for Missourians," the release said.
After dropping its partnership with the TeleCenter Network, plans are to "invest in other technologies to make Extension learning more accessible and responsive to the needs of citizens throughout Missouri."
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

UM compares employee benefits to those at peer institutions

By Josh Barone
November 8, 2010 | 9:45 p.m. CST

COLUMBIA — The University of Missouri System is looking at the employee benefits of 15 peer institutions to help it shape a new retirement plan.

The system has updated a 2008 benefits index that compares UM and those 15 schools to see which elements from their plans could be applied. The updated index includes data about staff for the first time.

Of the 15, UM is the only one with only a defined-benefits plan. Eight others offer only defined contributions, and seven offer a choice between the two plan styles.

Six of the schools are in the Big 12, and the rest are in the Big 10.

Under a defined-benefits plan, employees are guaranteed a pension for life after retirement, and the university assumes the market risk. Last year, UM employees began to pay a mandatory 1-to-2 percent into the plan.

Although the plan is fully funded, UM administrators worry about its future financial security because of fluctuations in the economy.

They are looking to move away from pensions to defined contributions, where the market risk shifts from the university to employees, similar to a 401(k).

UM manages the features and funding of its current retirement plan, but other schools with defined benefits do not — the states do.

UM Curator David Wasinger has suggested rolling benefits into the Missouri State Employees’ Retirement System, but UM System President Gary Forsee has said that is not on the table for consideration.
“They (at MOSERS) aren’t particularly interested,” Forsee said at a Nov. 1 meeting of the Board of Curators. “We’ve got a little more work to do with them down the road, but it’s not a current plan.”

There are other qualities of peer institutions that UM could apply to its employees. Betsy Rodriguez, UM vice president for human resources, presented an overview of these features in a presentation during the Nov. 1 meeting.

For example, 14 of the 15 institutions mandate employee contributions of 5 percent into direction-contribution plans. The universities themselves contribute 6 to 13 percent; the average is 9 percent.

Applied to the UM System, a new retirement plan could include a maximum 9 percent contribution from the university, Mary Ann Dutemple, a senior consultant from Towers Watson, said in the presentation.

Additionally, UM could take elements of peer institutions’ plans to best accommodate its objectives in creating a new benefits plan.

None of the plans in the index completely meets all goals, Rodriguez said at the meeting.

“We have to decide which objectives are most important, and what if any changes, have the least negative impact,” she said in an e-mail.

Also included in her presentation was a review of UM faculty salaries, which for the past few years have consistently ranked low, according to figures from the American Association of University Professors.

The benefits index includes rankings from 2008, at which time UM ranked second to last with a combined faculty average of $63,864 per year — roughly $2,000 less than Big 12 peer Iowa State University and $8,000 more than the University of Oregon.

The benefits index shows, however, that overall UM benefits rank in the “middle of peers.” Data for staff took into account more than 25 factors, which in total show that UM ranks slightly below average among the 15 peers.

The next step for UM administrators is to take this data, combined with faculty and staff input and additional research, and craft a recommended retirement plan to present to the Board of Curators at its December meeting.
At the Nov. 1 meeting, Forsee suggested the December deadline has become more fluid, contingent on whether there is a worthwhile plan to recommend. Curator Warren Erdman said he is confident in the timeframe but added, “We’re not bound by it.”

Meanwhile, the UM System also will create a special committee to provide what Rodriguez called faculty and staff voice regarding the retirement-plan discussion. It includes the curators' Compensation and Human Resources Committee, as well as faculty and staff, and will report to Rodriguez.
MU promotes global connections
Faculty work on cultural bonds.

By CATHERINE MARTIN

The University of Missouri celebrated recent strides in international studies today with its first International Showcase.

"We want to highlight the range and depth of international programs that are all developed and maintained by our faculty," James Scott, director of international relations for the university, said of the event.

Those faculty members displayed videos and posters about their programs, all aimed to help give students a broader perspective, in Memorial Union this morning after a speech from the chancellor.

"If we pursue the discovery of the world, I truly believe it will be a better place for all of us," Chancellor Brady Deaton said.

Some faculty represented well-known programs, such as the Peace Corps, while others showcased accomplishments or programs unique to MU, such as the Vietnam Institute.

"Our principal mission is to build bridges between MU, the USA and Vietnam," said program director Joe Hobbs, emphasizing that the program's connections go beyond education to include things such as government relationships.

The Vietnam Institute started in 2004 as the university worked to recruit more students from Vietnam. The initiative was met with success as the number of MU students from Vietnam increased between 2002 and 2010 from two students to 57.

"We want to develop a Vietnamese community, and next year we want even more students from Vietnam to come here," said Chinh Tran, a graduate assistant for the program.

David Ledoux, an animal science professor and director of a partnership between MU and Brazil, emphasized that the benefits of having international students study at MU is twofold.

"The students here benefit as they interact with international students and learn about another culture," Ledoux said. "It's really a two-way street."

Ledoux said his program has a significant positive impact on the lives and career opportunities for Brazilian students who come to MU.

"They get to work on their English, and they get to do hands-on training with equipment they might not otherwise have access to," he said.
Partnerships such as Ledoux’s and the Vietnam Institute have been key in increasing the number of international students at MU in recent years, Scott said.

Scott added that the university hopes to continue making strides with its international studies programs as it works to address global issues such as climate change and immigration.

“[The best universities are those that know no boundaries and pursue knowledge where it leads],” he said.

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MU survey shows students view diversity, campus climate positively

By Walker Moskop
November 8, 2010 | 8:08 p.m. CST

COLUMBIA — A majority of students believe MU is becoming a more welcoming campus, according to the results of a survey conducted last year by the Chancellor's Diversity Initiative.

Although 15.7 percent reported a harassment experience on campus, 59.7 percent of the 3,522 students surveyed said that from 2007 to 2009 MU had become "somewhat" or "a great deal" more welcoming to students from diverse backgrounds. Another 25.3 percent of students said the campus was "a little" more welcoming.

The results were presented at last month's Diversity Summit but have not been published.

The survey also measured student perception of diversity courses.

Although 38 percent had not taken a diversity class, those who did said they learned more about different cultures, as well as their own, as they completed more classes. About 43 percent of students said they had taken between one and three diversity courses.

"The research shows there's educational value in studying diversity," said Roger Worthington, assistant deputy chancellor for diversity, in an interview last week.

Of the approximately 550 students surveyed who reported harassment on campus, with some categories overlapping:

- 43.7 percent said they were harassed due to gender.
- 29 percent said they were harassed due to race or ethnicity.
- 24.9 percent said they were harassed due to political orientation.
• 22.1 percent said they were harassed due to religion.

• 14.9 percent said they were harassed due to sexual orientation.

The study defined harassment as “conduct that had interfered unreasonably with (a student’s) ability to work or learn on campus.”

Members of minority groups were more likely to report harassment and believe the campus had become less welcoming than majority groups, Worthington said.

Students of color were slightly more likely to believe the campus had become less welcoming than whites. Agnostics and atheists were slightly more likely to believe the campus had become less welcoming than students who were members of religious groups.

Worthington said this data was consistent with most campus climate studies, but the findings still need to be taken seriously. He said the university will continue to work to improve the climate for minority groups.

The study did uncover one unexpected finding: Liberals reported more incidents of harassment than conservatives.

Liberals, 38.1 percent of the participants, reported 47.4 percent of the incidents of harassment related to political orientation.

Conservative students, 24.1 percent of the survey population, reported 32.1 percent of the incidents.

Moderate students, 36.1 percent, reported 20.4 percent of the incidents.

Worthington said further research was needed to explain why liberal students reported more harassment, despite all political groups rating the campus as liberal to varying degrees.

Yet, the evidence flies in the face of critics who have claimed that MU is a liberal, “one party-institution,” he said.

“Despite the fact that everybody agrees more or less that the campus is more liberal than conservative...there’s not all the negative findings of conservative students being bothered by it or suggesting they’re being harassed more than liberals,” Worthington said.

“In fact, it’s the other way around.”
Veterans video program reinstated

BY TONY MESSENGER tmesenger@post-dispatch.com > 573-635-6178 | Posted: Tuesday, November 9, 2010 12:05 am

JEFFERSON CITY • Go to the popular Missouri Veterans Stories website, and you'll be met with an "URGENT" message in red capital letters asking you to help save the program from the budget-cutting heap by contacting your state legislator.

The message is outdated. The program that digitally records the recollections of veterans and saves them for future generations was cut last legislative session, saving taxpayers $500,000.

But now the video program has been reborn with the help of state Rep. Jill Schupp, D-Creve Coeur, the University of Missouri, the state historical society, and various veterans and volunteers who thought the videos were too important to lose.

The cost to taxpayers will be negligible, Schupp said, which is a far cry from the $1,400-per-video cost that led to criticism of the arrangement with a private vendor earlier this year.

On Thursday, which is Veterans Day, a new version of the program — called the Missouri Veterans History Project — will be unveiled at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

"It's up and running in Columbia," Schupp said, "but we need people to help expand to other communities."

Among the hackers of the video project is the Missouri Veterans Commission, which will help connect veterans to volunteer videographers, said commission spokesman Daniel Bell.

The idea of the video project is the same as it was at its inception: Preserve the stories of the men and women who have fought for America's freedom. As the country's veterans age, such a project takes on increased urgency. According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, there are about 2 million remaining living veterans of World War II, for instance, and they are dying at a rate of around 1,000 a day.
The Library of Congress has a similar video story program that has recorded about 68,000 veterans' stories.

Just last week at a meeting of the Missouri Association of Veterans Organizations, members were wondering what had become of the veterans’ stories program, said Lynn Dorrell, commander of the American Legion in Missouri.

"We’re all for it," Dorrell said of the new arrangement.

Dorrell said he was concerned that politics might have played a role in the budget cut last year, but he said it’s an important program and he hopes it is around for years to come.

Last summer, after the previous version of the program — which was directed by Lt. Gov. Peter Kinder — was defunded, Schupp put together a group to try to figure out how to save the video stories that are popular with veterans groups. She turned to the journalism program at the University of Missouri to find the expertise and equipment to start making the videos without the high cost of a private vendor.

The program had produced several hundred videos since 2007, but the expense was criticized by lawmakers in both parties. Also, questions were raised about the Chesterfield company that had the contract to make the videos because of its connections to a Clayton-based funeral-services company accused by prosecutors in a sweeping fraud case.

The original contract to operate the veterans stories project was awarded to Forever Enterprises, a prepaid funeral services company that collapsed in a heap of debt and controversy in 2008. Consumers who bought prepaid funeral services contracts with the company complained that when it came time to bury their loved ones, the contracts were not honored. One criminal indictment has emerged from the sweeping investigation into Forever Enterprises’ operations.

Two executives from Forever later incorporated a new company called Patriot Productions, which took on the state video contract. That company was paid $1.7 million since the inception of the program. It claims to have made about 1,300 videos, though the website of the program lists 771. More than 200 of the videos are of St. Louis County veterans.

Kinder had defended the program and fought to keep it in the budget, but the money was cut. Neither Kinder nor Patriot Productions executive Randy Murray returned calls seeking comment Monday.

Among those who were critical of the spending last year was Sen. Brad Lager, R-Savannah. Lager said he was glad to hear the program was being saved in a less expensive version.

"The program has merit," Lager said. "But the only person who thinks that it’s reasonable to spend $1,400 per video is the guy getting paid."
There is no line item in the state budget for the video project, though Schupp said that there are indirect state costs related to the work her legislative aide and some university employees have put into the project.

In its newer form, the program will be somewhat limited by the number of trained volunteers, Schupp said. She and other supporters of the project have applied for nonprofit status for the organization so it can seek donations to help fund the videos.

The University of Missouri's School of Journalism committed to letting the veterans stories program use some of the school's video equipment, as long as journalism students or school officials are involved. In the future, the school has committed to developing a course credit for students taking on the veterans stories as video projects, Schupp said.

Still unanswered, she said, is how the old videos — which are searchable on the veterans stories website (www.missouriveteransstories.org) — and the new videos will be combined in a library of sorts.

"We're trying to locate them so we can put them all together," Schupp said.

The pilot project of the new program, focused on Columbia-area veterans, has produced 10 veterans videos so far.