COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Forty MU programs back in discussion for elimination or reconfiguration

By Walker Moskop
December 7, 2010 | 7:22 p.m. CST

COLUMBIA — Forty MU programs thought to be safely out of reach are now back in the state-mandated program review discussion.

The Missouri Department of Higher Education put the programs back on the table after the university removed them from a list of "low-producing" degrees.

The state wants further justification, said MU Provost Brian Foster in an e-mail to deans Tuesday.

In October, the state gave MU a list of 75 programs that failed to meet the state's threshold for "low-producing" degrees, based on the number of graduates a program produces.

MU whittled them down to about 25 and argued that the rest did not need to be reconfigured or eliminated.

"We will NOT have the option of simply not acting on those that are 'under consideration.'" Foster said. "I will have to have a compelling reason, with supporting data, for sustaining or realigning EACH of the 25 programs."

The state, however, is also requiring information about 40 additional programs to complete its review.

Foster has repeatedly emphasized that the process should be used as an opportunity to improve the quality of programs offered by MU. He said an immediate concern is
meeting a tight deadline and told the deans he needs to respond to the state by mid­
December.

Foster said that he has heard nothing from some departments regarding potential
changes.

"If I do not have strong responses from each of your programs ... I will have no choice
but to make my response without your input," he told the deans.

While Foster and other administrators have agreed with faculty sentiment that
graduation numbers are a limited measure for productivity, he stressed in his letter that
time is slipping away and decisions have to be made.
MU researchers tap kitchen cabinet in cancer fight

The Associated Press • December 8, 2010

COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) — A University of Missouri researcher has found that a common household spice could reduce toxic byproducts in the global fight against cancer.

Radiology professor Kattesh Katti is touting cinnamon as a non-toxic alternative to the harmful chemicals and acids commonly used to create gold nanoparticles. The tiny pieces of gold are used in cancer-fighting drugs as well as common electronics.

Katti’s research team found that mixing gold salts with cinnamon produces the phytochemicals needed to fight deadly cancer cells. The finding continues his work into "green" uses of nanotechnology.

The Missouri study was recently published in the scientific journal Pharmaceutical Research.
Missourians who most struggle to pay for college need a champion

The Editorial Board | Posted: Tuesday, December 7, 2010 9:15 pm

The prospects for public higher education in Missouri appear to be especially bleak in the coming year, particularly for children from middle-class and lower-income families.

Gov. Jay Nixon signaled that a two-year tuition freeze will end beginning next fall, and more cuts in state support for higher education are in store. This year, the governor cut Missouri’s only needs-based scholarship program, Access Missouri, by more than half -- to approximately $30 million from the $82.8 million appropriated by the Legislature.

An infusion of cash from Missouri’s Higher Education Loan Authority restored $30 million of that amount, but that still left Access Missouri with $20 million less to distribute to needy students than in the previous budget year and without secure replacement funds in future years.

Indeed, because of a sharp rise in eligible students, the maximum Access Missouri grant available to students attending Missouri’s public four-year colleges and universities shrank to $950 from about $1,700.

We asked Mr. Nixon’s communications staff whether the governor has any proposals pending — or expects to be making any proposals during the coming legislative session — to improve access to state colleges and universities for children from middle- or lower-income Missouri families. Specifically, we wondered whether he would be proposing any funding increases or decreases to the Access Missouri program.

Scott Holste, a spokesman for the governor, said that the “proposed state budget for the next fiscal year is still very much a work in progress, and it’s too early to talk about funding for specific programs.”

This lack of specifics is understandable. The state budget process is an ungainly dance in which participants have little incentive to signal their intentions in advance.

But high school seniors hoping to attend the University of Missouri-Columbia next fall don’t have that luxury. They have begun the desperate scramble to fund their educations. They need to know now.
Mr. Nixon's spokesman said that the governor is keenly interested in improving access to higher education. He notes that Missouri's university system stood alone nationally in freezing tuition for two years in a row. He observed that enrollment is up by 10,000 students systemwide.

Missouri must be "doing something right — and, in fact, several things right — when it comes to increasing accessibility for Missouri students," he said.

The governor can be proud of these accomplishments. But there are reasons to question the extent of their reach.

Missouri's financially neediest college students benefited least from the tuition freeze. Benefits from the second year were all but offset by the decreased Access Missouri scholarship funding. Moreover, nothing in published enrollment data indicates whether children from lower-income Missouri families win their fair share of enrollment gains.

Indeed, high school graduates from outside Missouri made up one of the largest growth categories. The number of Illinois residents enrolling as first-time students at the University of Missouri-Columbia this fall exceeded by 50 percent the number of first-time students from the city of St. Louis and St. Charles and Jefferson counties combined.

Missouri's financially neediest high school graduates face major barriers to higher education even in the best of times. The question is whether in hard times Mr. Nixon and Missouri's other top political leaders will champion them and their futures.
MU women's committee requests lactation rooms in renovated buildings

By Ayla Kremer
December 7, 2010 | 5:07 p.m. CST

COLUMBIA — As campus construction continues, some MU faculty and staff have raised a question about installing lactation rooms during renovations.

The Status of Women Committee wrote a letter to Deputy Chancellor Michael Middleton asking whether MU was planning to include lactation rooms as part of renovations — in Tate and Switzer halls in particular.

Middleton said the request is "reasonable and legitimate" and that it is important for all employees to be accommodated.

Currently, 10 lactation stations are open on campus. A list of the locations and amenities in each center can be found on the MU Equity website. The rooms vary in terms of amenities and privacy.

For this request to be approved, Middleton said, it will first go to Campus Facilities, where a recommendation will be made. Then Chancellor Brady Deaton will make the final decision about whether or not to include lactation rooms in future renovations.

"Whenever a request is made, we work to provide some kind of accommodation," Middleton said. "The university will try their best to accommodate the request to the extent that it is possible and financially reasonable."

Middleton said that, in a perfect world, there would be such a room in every building.

"There are competing needs for classrooms and offices, though, so it becomes a matter of balancing needs," he said.
Middleton forwarded the request to Jacquelyn Jones, vice chancellor for administrative services, who oversees Campus Facilities.

Jones said in an e-mail that her office will do an initial review of the request and then determine whether committees should provide input. After considering the feasibility of the request in terms of cost, space usage issues and funding, the office will make a recommendation.

Jones said she was unsure when an assessment would be completed.

Karlan Seville, spokeswoman for Campus Facilities, said that she wasn’t aware of any plans for new lactation rooms on campus but that there are options available for nursing mothers on campus.

“I know that when (the Bond) Life Sciences (Center) opened, they put a lactation room in there, and it was for anyone on campus that wanted to use it,” she said. “Other than that, I know that departments are encouraged to make accommodations for women who want to breast-feed or use a breast pump in their buildings.”

Although she does not know the degree of use of the existing lactation rooms, Ellen McLain, co-chairwoman of the Status of Women Committee, said that it is still important that these facilities be available.

“It’s important that people have access to these rooms because it’s very important for moms to bond with their babies, and when babies are nursed, they don’t get sick as often,” she said. “It’s also awfully good for the mom’s health, too.”

McLain said the committee’s next step is to learn more about construction policies on campus and see how they apply to making renovation requests.

In the meantime, the committee hopes to bring awareness to the issue and let mothers know where the current rooms are.

"I think we just need to educate people about where they can go," she said.
Should public hiring searches be open or closed?

Transparent and open searches for high-profile public jobs help land better leaders for the communities being served and leave the public with little doubt about the quality of the selection process and final pick, advocates say.

However, some say disclosing the name of applicants hampers the ability to attract a large and diverse pool of candidates, who are often hesitant to let current employers know they are sending out applications.

City and school leaders in West Des Moines are familiar with both sides. The council has spent the past six months searching largely behind closed doors for a new city manager with the help of a search firm it hired for almost $14,000 of taxpayer money. The opening netted 63 applicants, of which only three finalists will be publicly named.

West Des Moines school board members have yet to decide what part the public will play in their search for a new superintendent and whether the names of applicants will be released. At least three board members, however, say they have no problem keeping mum on the candidate pool until finalists are chosen. They will seek guidance from the search firm they hire later this month before making a final decision.

Releasing the names could cause some not to apply, said Jill Hansen, a West Des Moines school board member. "It's a balancing act of the public's right to know and at what stage vs. the legitimate concerns of people who are stepping out there and wanting to put their name forward for the position. It's not an easy decision to make."

Iowa is unusual in that it allows public entities to keep applicant information confidential during the search, said Kenneth Bunting, executive director of the National Freedom of Information Coalition, a group based at the University of Missouri. Policies differ by states, but many require the names of finalists to be released, he said.

Iowa law allows government bodies to hold closed meetings when filling positions if the applicant requests it or if it would needlessly cause harm to their reputation, said Kathleen Richardson, executive secretary of the Iowa Freedom of Information Council.

Also, the Iowa Supreme Court ruled in a 1988 case between Sioux City and the Sioux City Press Club that the names of job applicants can be kept confidential if the government entity believes transparency would discourage candidates from applying for a position.
"A city council or school board work for the citizens," Bunting said. "It's the citizen's government that is going to be affected by the selection and, at the end of the day, government in the sunshine is better than government behind closed doors."

Cities and school districts are turning to search firms more frequently for help in filling top positions, Bunting and Richardson said. Many prefer to work behind closed doors and advise public bodies to keep the process closed. That has led to less transparency, because some firms ask applicants to request confidentiality from the start, Richardson said.

"It makes it easier, and there's less hassle if everything is done behind closed doors," she said.

The West Des Moines council plans to interview six city manager candidates - whose names will be not be released - and offer the job to one within about 48 hours.

After a day of closed interviews with the six candidates on Dec. 13, the council will announce the names of the three finalists for the job at the start of the biweekly council meeting.

The public will get its first chance to meet those candidates at 7:30 a.m. Dec. 14. Candidates will get five minutes apiece to speak before mingling with residents until 9 a.m.

The candidates will then rotate through interviews the rest of the morning with three panels:

• All city department heads and Jody Smith, interim city manager.

• A representative of each city board and commission, including Plan and Zoning, Board of Adjustment, Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, Human Rights Commission, Human Services Board, West Des Moines Water Works, Civil Service Commission and Library Board of Trustees.

• Twenty-three leaders from major employers like Aviva USA and Wells Fargo Home Mortgage.

The panels will submit their opinions to the council. Mayor Steve Gaer said it's important for the city's business stakeholders to meet the candidates.

"These three candidates are going to spend all day Tuesday with the stakeholders," Gaer said. "I'm comfortable that everybody's going to have a good enough feel."

The council hopes to offer the job to someone on Dec. 15. The new city manager's start date will depend on his or her contract with the current employer.

"There's just been a lot of legwork done before we even picked the final six," Gaer said. "I don't want people to have the perception that we spent two days and we picked somebody. This has been going on for weeks and months."

Slavin Management Consultants, a search firm in Norcross, Ga., is handling the process. The firm helped the city hire Jeff Pomeranz, who arrived in 1998 and left for Cedar Rapids in
"We've tried to make it as transparent as we can," Councilman Charles Schneider said. "If we make the name of every single applicant public, then we are likely to run into a problem finding people who are willing to go through that level of scrutiny. They'll be afraid that their council will terminate their contracts."

School board members are beginning the search to replace Superintendent Tom Narak, who is retiring in June. They met with four search firms last week, and plan to make a selection at a Dec. 13 meeting. Then they will discuss how to proceed with the search, including how they will involve the public and whether they will release names, board members said.

"I don't think it hurts the process or the public to wait until we have finalists to announce," said Tom Suckow, school board president. "I'm not sure who it benefits by having the pool open at the very beginning, and I don't know if the public knew who the candidates were at the beginning how that would influence our search one way or another."

Representatives from all four search firms told the board they typically meet with stakeholder groups before soliciting candidate applications to get an idea of what qualities and skills are wanted, as well as issues facing the district.

All but one firm said they typically only release the names of two to four finalists unless the board directs them otherwise. They said public disclosure of all candidates hampers the candidate pool.

"It's a tough issue," said Gaylord Tryon, president of G. Tryon and Associates, an Iowa search firm that applied for the West Des Moines schools job. "You are talking about a balancing act between the public's right to know and the candidates' right to keep their applications confidential. We know for a fact based on experience that if a person's application is going to be made public right away it will discourage applicants."

McPherson & Jacobson of Omaha was the only search firm to interview with the board that promotes transparency from the beginning. Tom Jacobson, owner of the firm, said openness hasn't hampered the search firm's ability to draw a qualified and diverse pool of candidates. It recently conducted the search for a superintendent in the Bondurant school district and attracted upward of 40 applicants, he said.

"This is a public position, and the public's business should be done in public," Jacobson said. "Anytime you are a public entity the public has a right to know what's going on. The public process does not hinder the selection of a good person."
'Kung Pao Kitten' recipe deemed inappropriate

By Janese Silvey

Tuesday, December 7, 2010

A mock recipe calling for boneless kitten meat that landed in a University of Missouri internal newsletter has riled some on campus.

"Kung Pao Kitten" was one of two featured "Recipes of the Month" in the December issue of Staff Spotlight, a staff newsletter within MU School of Medicine’s Department of Surgery. The newsletter was sent to about 90 employees.

The recipe is similar to kung pao chicken but instead calls for kitten halves to be chunked and marinated in white wine, soy sauce and oil and combined with water chestnuts and peanuts. There’s a disclaimer under the recipe that reads: "The tastes and opinions within the Staff Spotlight do not necessarily represent those of all contributors. No animals were hurt in the making of this Spotlight."

School spokesman Rich Gleba said it was not supposed to be taken seriously.

Staff members apparently weren't amused. An anonymous complaint sent to the Tribune along with a copy of the newsletter said employees found the recipe "extremely offensive, discriminatory, tasteless and not something that should have been distributed in a professional environment."

David Kubiak, a care coordinator within the surgery department, submitted the recipe, according to the newsletter. Kubiak referred questions to Gleba.

A formal statement from the department said the "material is inappropriate and insensitive, and the staff member responsible for sending it apologized minutes after it was distributed."

Gleba would not say whether any disciplinary actions were taken against Kubiak or employees who printed the newsletter. Kubiak is still employed by the university.

Roger Worthington, assistant deputy chancellor and chief diversity officer, learned of the incident from a Tribune reporter. With thousands of employees on campus and within the health system, it's not surprising to have "somebody who may not be as culturally sophisticated as we would like," he said.
These issues provide opportunities for quick lessons about cultural sensitivity, Worthington said.

In general, he said the School of Medicine has been a leader in diversity efforts over the past several years, including forming a task force to promote diversity.

The feline recipe has administrators rethinking how the monthly Staff Spotlight is put together.

Right now, an employee collects recipes and other information, such as birthdays and fitness tips, from staff members and distributes it in newsletter form without administrative oversight. In the future, Gleba said, administrators will review that content first.

Reach Janese Silvey at 573-815-1705 or e-mail jsilvey@columbian.com.
Mizzou Med School Docs Don't *Really* Eat Kung Pao Kitten

By Aimee Levitt
published: Tue., Dec. 7 2010 @ 3:30PM

A recipe in "Staff Spotlight", the newsletter of the University of Missouri Medical School Department of Surgery, caused some consternation in Columbia, but rest assured, feline lovers, Mizzou docs don’t *really* recommend Kung Pao Kitten as a holiday dish. It was just a joke!

Nonetheless, a concerned (and anonymous) Mizzou employee sent the offending newsletter to the local paper, the Columbia Tribune, with a note that complained that the recipe was "extremely offensive, discriminatory, tasteless and not something that should have been distributed in a professional environment."

The tastelessness is actually still up for debate, since the recipe contained a disclaimer that read, "The tastes and opinions within the Staff Spotlight do not necessarily represent those of all contributors. No animals were hurt in the making of this Spotlight." Which would lead one to believe that nobody actually *made* the Kung Pao Kitten.

(However, Beppe Bigazzi, host of an Italian cooking show, informed his audiences earlier this year that "tender, white cat meat" is "tastier than other animals." He drew the ire of animal rights activists and was suspended from his show, even after he protested that kitten was a popular dish in his village in Tuscany back in the 30s and 40s when the fascists were in power.)

The ingredient list for Kung Pao Kitten, as reported by the Tribune, is relatively modest: soy sauce, vinegar and oil for the marinade; peanuts and water chestnuts for the garnish and a kitten halved and then cut into chunks for the protein.

The recipe was submitted by David Kubiak, a care coordinator within the surgery department. Despite the ire of his colleagues, he has not been fired (yet), and Rich Gleba, a school spokesman, declined to tell the Tribune whether he had even been disciplined. It is also unknown whether he has a history of harming cats.

He has, however, apologized.

In the future, Gleba said, the newsletter will be more closely scrutinized by the administration before it's distributed to the 90 staff members of the Department of Surgery.
Roger Worthington, Mizzou's chief diversity officer, said he was not aware of the incident before a Tribune reporter mentioned it to him, but added that he hoped everyone had learned a valuable lesson from this.

Namely, that cat people have no sense of humor.
Chicago Tribune

What's with "come with"?

Investigating the origins (and proper use) of this and other Midwesternisms

By Heidi Stevens, Tribune Newspapers

December 8, 2010

We Midwesterners have a way with words. And the rest of the country has a way of replying, "Say what?"

Consider this e-mail from Northern Californian Carolyn Koehler, in response to an article about commonly mixed-up words. (More on the mixed-up words next week.)

"I have a couple of words used to express the same condition that are pronounced differently: Drought and drouth," Koehler wrote. "My late husband was from the Midwest (St. Louis) and always used the 'drouth' pronunciation. We argued the correctness, my being such a logophile."

Which got us thinking about the rich and textured make-up of our great nation, made ever stronger by its diversity. And also how rare it is for both spouses to be right in an argument.

But right both Kochlers were. Linguist Matthew J. Gordon, assistant professor of English at the University of Missouri, Columbia, studies regional pronunciations, which he wrote about in his book, "Small-Town Values, Big-City Vowels" (Duke University Press). He says "drouth" was quite common in its day — last century.

"When linguists tried to document traditional dialect patterns in the middle of the 20th Century, they found that the 'drouth' pronunciation was the dominant one in most parts of the country," Gordon says. "The version with 't' at the end was more common among educated speakers and that's probably why it became the more common one today."

Perhaps drouth lingered longer in St. Louis than California. Distinct pronunciations and phrases take root and survive in certain regions of the country due in part to the area's immigrant history.

Which brings us to "come with," probably the most common example of Midwest speak. "I'm going for coffee. You want to come with?" (Also works for "bring with," "go with" and most verbs indicating movement.)

John Spatz, assistant professor in the department of writing studies at the University of Minnesota Duluth, explored the famous phrase in his PhD dissertation: "Do You Want to Come With?: A Cross-dialectal, Multi-field, Variationist Investigation of With as a Particle Selected By Motion Verbs in The Minnesota Dialect of English."
He says "come with" can be traced to the upper Midwest's heavily German, Norwegian, Swedish and Dutch roots.

"Basically these immigrants landed here, and in learning English took some of the nuances of their languages and mapped them on to English," Spartz says. "There are some super technical linguistic reasons that happened, but essentially the phrase is prevalent in a variety of those languages so it makes sense that it would find its way into English as well."

But is it grammatically correct?

"It's actually completely correct," says Spartz. "Grammar school grammar rules tell you not to end a sentence with a preposition, but it's not a preposition. It's actually a particle as part of a phrasal verb. Just like in 'I kicked over a bucket,' 'kicked' and 'over' are both part of the verb. 'With' is, in fact, part of the verb. The verb moves as a unit."

We're not going to argue. (Did you see this guy's dissertation title?)

Besides, as a linguist, Spartz is less interested in whether a phrase passes the English 101 test and more interested in language as a living, evolving subject.

"Prescribed rules written in a book aren't necessarily representative of how language is used currently," he says. "If you look at Chaucer's English, Shakespeare's English, you see it's an evolutionary process to get where we are today. I'm concerned with where things are and where they've been, and none of that relates to rules specifically."
Farm-to-school effort uses local vendors to supply vegetables to Raymore-Peculiar schools

By MINDY KINNAMAN

The current economy is rough, but that hasn’t stopped the Raymore-Peculiar School District from making sure its students receive the best, most-nutritious meals.

Earlier this semester, through its Child Nutrition Program, the district began purchasing fresh produce from area vendors to serve to students.

The idea for the program was suggested after Colleen Johnston, director of child nutrition, decided that she wanted to market the Child Nutrition Program. She wanted to create a farm-to-school program.

Board member Ryan Wescoat, who also serves as business development specialist for the University of Missouri Extension Center in Cass County, knew precisely where to look.

“I work with local growers to find new vendors and find new revenue streams.” Wescoat said.

Wescoat suggested a four-county auction in Windsor, Mo., where they could purchase the produce, specifically produce with a longer shelf life.

As part of the program, Johnston has purchased vegetables like Chinese cabbage, squash, sweet potatoes, peppers, cucumbers, onions and pumpkin. She also has purchased watermelon, cantaloupe and apples.

“The kids are pretty excited to see as many fresh fruit and vegetables as we can give them.” Johnston said. “Pretty much all have been accepted. They’ve never had sweet potatoes since I’ve been here.

“I’ve heard positive communication from teachers, parents and students. They seem to love the different variety.”

The program is saving the district money. For instance, a case of apples was $8 cheaper at the auction than if it were purchased from a supplier.
Money also is being saved by the amount of food being consumed. The district monitored the waste and found that very little of the fresh produce was being thrown away.

But while the produce is cheaper, Johnston and others must travel to the auctions, missing out on office work, which still needs to be completed. Johnston said, though, that the work still gets done.

"I think it's very worthwhile," Johnston said. "It's a lot of extra work, but, overall, it's worth it to see the children excited."

As winter approaches and the growing season for most produce has ended, the district is looking at other options to obtain fresh produce. One option is an outreach program with Lincoln University.

The district also is talking with local suppliers to see if they can help meet the district's needs. With greenhouses and high tunnels, movable structures covered in plastic that allows light in but provides protection from the elements, local suppliers may be able to work within the district's budget.

And Johnston has other ideas to help save money while providing fresh produce to students.

"I'm actually going to be talking to principals to see about piloting school gardens," Johnston said. "One is interested in having a five-acre garden. We're looking at planting in the spring."