

MAR 21 2011



University president

A new breed of cat

What a difference a few years and a particular personality can make.

Tomorrow the University of Missouri Board of Curators will hear from an advisory committee fresh from asking around about qualifications for the next UM president.

The general consensus on and off campus favors a person like former President Gary Forsee with a résumé well put Wednesday by Tribune reporter Janese Silvey as “a politically savvy businessman with ties to the state who understands the importance of higher education.”

This is not the general opinion one would have gotten, particularly from faculty members, before Forsee took office. Several told today’s survey committee they would not have favored a person like Forsee before observing his management of the institution.

When the search was on before Forsee was named, Board of Curators then-President Don Walsworth, himself a successful businessman, led the charge for considering someone from industry to run the university. I agreed, arguing a person from outside the academy could bring valuable management skills and educators on campus should expect a persona with that sort of background to meddle less in academic affairs than an educator might.

After all, almost above all else, a successful titan of industry relies on delegation of serious functions to qualified associates. When a president of Sprint, for instance, takes over a place like the University of Missouri, would he not be likely to delegate academic management to chancellors on the several campuses so long as they performed well? Yes, he would, and he did.

This is not to say the perfect university president with business expertise would ignore academics any more than a perfect university president from academia would be ignorant of university business. But in today’s environment, political and economic development skills are crucial, and these are more likely to be found in industry. Smart academic management skills exist and can be tapped on campus.

Obviously, the good candidate from the world of business must also care a lot about higher education.

Gary Forsee’s tenure at UM was an important milestone, opening minds on and off campus to a broad new potential pool of candidates for president. The blend of business and political skills

from the outside with academic expertise from the inside can work very well. It all depends on individual candidates, but no longer are searches limited to people from campuses.

HJW III

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Presidential search update at UM shrugged off in Columbia

BY TIM BARKER tbarker@post-dispatch.com > 314-340-8350 | Posted: Saturday, March 19, 2011 12:15 am

COLUMBIA, MO. • Looking out across faculty, students and staff arrayed before him, Warren Erdman found himself almost pleading for someone to say something. Anything.

Yet after a lengthy update on the search for a new president, the chairman of the University of Missouri's Board of Curators could draw only a handful of comments from the 60 or so people who gathered earlier this week at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

It was one of seven statewide meetings aimed at capturing a sense of what everyone wants from the man or woman who will be the system's 23rd president. Gary Forsee resigned from the post earlier this year to spend time with his ill wife.

Observers might be tempted to read the tepid audience response as a sign of indifference.

Not Erdman. He suggested that the university community is, by and large, happy with the system's direction.

"It's more indicative of calm confidence," said Erdman, while admitting he had expected a more robust exchange.

Among the few who did stand up to speak was Paul Rolfe, a senior from Kansas City, who told curators it would be nice to have a president who listens to students. Rolfe, however, wasn't surprised that his was the only student voice.

"Nobody I've talked to even knew this was going on," Rolfe said. "It's not a big deal, really."

Well, maybe not to the students. And maybe not to those who would obsess endlessly over replacing Mizzou's football or basketball coach. But there is plenty on the line here, particularly at a time when the economy is wreaking havoc with the system's four campuses.

"It's probably the highest stakes game there is. This person sets the tone and tenor for the university for the short term and the long term," said Peter Eckel, director of the American Council on Education's Center for Effective Leadership.

And when it comes down to it, this probably isn't the best time to be looking for a new leader. With the economy forcing cuts in higher education spending here and across the nation, the president's job description has grown a lot more demanding than it was even three or four years ago, say experts in the field of executive searches.

The ideal résumé will include a mix of academic, business and political experience. The candidate needs to crave a challenge and have the creativity to identify new ways to bring money into the system, said Shelly Storbeck, a Philadelphia-based search consultant who has no role in the UM search.

"I don't think there is an overabundance in terms of great candidates," Storbeck said. "We are going to see a lot less interest in these jobs than ever before."

Storbeck and others say it's likely the search process will take the better part of a year. And that fits fairly well with what appears to be a rather deliberate approach by system leaders.

They have refused to impose a timetable and, in fact, haven't even officially posted the job. So far, they have put together an advisory committee and hired a search firm, Greenwood/Asher & Associates — which happens to be the same unit that helped lure former UM President Elson Floyd to Washington State University in 2006.

System officials also haven't taken a stand on the type of background they want to see in the candidate pool.

Forsce's selection in late 2007 caused a bit of hand-wringing on the four campuses because of his lack of academic pedigree. The former chief executive and president of Sprint Nextel brought considerable business acumen to the post just as the economy was starting into its tailspin.

It was, in the eyes of some campus observers, the right skill set for the times.

But despite the fact that the economy is still the biggest problem facing higher education, UM officials say they aren't necessarily looking for a Forsce clone. Curators have repeatedly said the search will not emphasize one background over another.

But increasingly, these types of high-level posts are ending up in the hands of men and women whose backgrounds contain more than academic experience. It's just the nature of the position these days, said Dennis Barden, a Chicago-area search consultant.

"This person's job is not to worry about curriculum. It's their job to worry about resources," Barden said. "It's hard for people in the higher education community to wrap their heads around that. But this job has changed a lot."

Still, candidates without solid campus experience are likely to encounter some resistance from faculty and staff members.

While many have praised Forsee's tenure, there are still those who say he stumbled a few times — particularly during his first year — because he didn't understand the academic world. Some, like Joe Martinich, a business professor at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, hopes the next president doesn't need as much on-the-job training as Forsee did.

"I don't think the CEO model works well," Martinich said. "The decision making is different. And I think it should be different."



UM curators consider presidential qualifications

7:16 AM, Mar 21, 2011

COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) - University of Missouri curators head to Rolla to determine the qualifications for the system's next president.

The two-day meeting beginning Monday at Missouri University of Science and Technology follows several statewide public forums by a 20-member advisory panel that will help curators choose the new president.

Curators are looking to replace Gary Forsee, who retired in January to care for his ill wife. Former general counsel Steve Owens is the interim president but is not interested in the permanent job.

Campus leaders expect the presidential search to last most of this year. Curators will craft a statement on the desired qualifications of the four-campus system's next leader based in part on public comments from the statewide meetings.



Diversity mandate wins initial OK

150 MU classes included on list.

By **JANESE SILVEY**

A diversity-intensive class will be added to the University of Missouri's slate of required general education courses if faculty members approve the plan next month.

The MU Faculty Council gave first-round approval yesterday to the requirement, which would make all undergraduates take a diversity-designated class.

The council is not suggesting an implementation date, though, so it's unclear when that mandate might go into effect, Chairwoman Leona Rubin said. Requiring undergraduates to take the course starting with the freshman class this fall isn't impossible, she said, but it's more likely it would first apply to the 2012 freshman class.

The requirement wouldn't tack an additional three hours onto a student's course load but rather would identify classes that could double as diversity-intensive. Similar to MU's "writing-intensive" classes, existing courses would be stamped with the "DI" label and would count toward another general education requirement, such as a humanities credit, as well as toward the diversity mandate.

A draft of the proposal originally included a list of some 150 classes that could serve as DI credits, including courses in English, film studies and music as well as in more obvious disciplines such as sociology and black studies.

The list was meant to serve only as a sampling, but it caused some concern among Faculty Council members. Having a list already made sends the wrong message because any list inevitably would leave someone out, said Clyde Bentley, council vice chair and associate professor of journalism.

It will ultimately be up to a committee to approve DI classes, and faculty members who want to teach them will have to apply and make a case for why their courses count. "Let people apply; otherwise I think someone's going to get hurt," Bentley said.

Faculty ultimately agreed to provide the list but not to include it in the language that will go to faculty for a vote.

The diversity requirement decision comes on the heels of two back-to-back Black History Month incidents on campus. In February, freshman Benjamin Elliott was arrested on suspicion of spray-painting a racist slur on a statue outside Hatch Hall. A year ago, two MU students pleaded guilty to littering after they lined cotton balls outside of the Gaines/Oldham Black Culture Center.

Talk of a diversity requirement has been on the table since 2004 when the Legion of Black Collegians sent a letter to newly appointed Chancellor Brady Deaton listing 10 demands, including the mandatory diversity course

The recent incidents "raised awareness about the proposal and speed of which it has moved through the approval process," said Roger Worthington, MU's chief diversity officer.

The entire faculty is expected to vote on the change at a general meeting in late April. Faculty members at that time will also vote on a proposed change in the capstone requirement. The Faculty Council voted to keep that requirement but allow some departments to use a 4000-level course to fill it.

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COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Budget shortfall projected for MU, even with tuition increase

By [Victoria Guida](#)

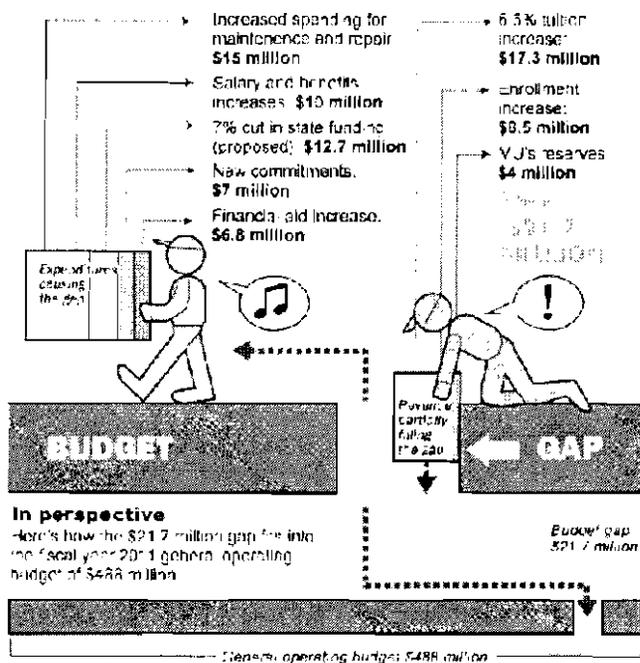
March 19, 2011 | 5:40 p.m. CDT

FILLING THE GAP

Despite \$29.8 million in revenue increases projected for next year, MU is still expected to have a \$21.7 million funding gap in its general operating budget for next year.

Losses: \$51.5 million

Revenue: \$29.8 million



Despite \$29.8 million in revenue increases projected for next year, MU is still expected to have a \$21.7 million funding gap in its general operating budget. | STACEY SCHUTZMAN/Missourian

COLUMBIA — The UM System Board of Curators will be looking closely at the 2012 budget when it meets Monday in Rolla.

The good news for the UM System: The state approved a tuition waiver that will save MU \$13.3 million.

The bad news for the UM System: MU still potentially faces a \$21.7 million funding gap.

Even with the 6.5 percent tuition increase at MU, projected numbers show a \$21.7 million difference between projected revenue and expenses. Part of that is the result of an anticipated 7 percent cut for higher education institutions in the state budget.

Portions of the MU budget are likely to face additional cuts in an effort to close the gap, said MU Budget Director Tim Rooney.

He said many departments will see smaller budgets and must begin to plan accordingly. Already, MU has cut 19 programs that awarded degrees to a low number of students.

"The departments are going to have to work hard to find the funds within because we don't have the money to give to them," he said.

Certain items will most likely remain intact, the budget director said. These items include the maintenance and repair budget, insurance premiums for buildings and automobiles and the campuses' scholarships budgets — \$65 million for scholarships and graduate-fee waivers.

The acquisitions budget for MU libraries does not typically get cut either, he said.

"The faculty, in the past, have said, 'Please don't do that. Cut elsewhere,'" Rooney said.

The \$21.7 million figure includes a spending increase for maintenance and repairs, which is recommended, Rooney said.

The total need for maintenance and repairs across the campus equals \$511 million, though not all of those needs are dire, said MU spokesman Christian Basi. The university spent about \$13 million on maintenance and repairs last year and would spend about \$28 million with the increase.

The alternative would be to defer maintenance, which has consequences, Basi said. For example, in January, a sprinkler head froze and broke, causing minor flooding in the glass display in the Anheuser-Busch building.

Interim UM System President Steve Owens and others have made the case to the General Assembly that MU is important to the state.

In presentations before House and Senate appropriations committees last month, Owens highlighted the significant research conducted by faculty and economic benefits the state receives from the university. Budget cuts, he said, threaten the mission of education and research.

The tuition increase was an essential factor in making the budget manageable. After two years without an increase, UM administrators argued that the system could no longer keep the lid on tuition with the looming state cuts.

Any increase greater than the rate of inflation must get approval from the commissioner of the Department of Higher Education. The state granted the waiver last week, and David Russell, Missouri's higher education commissioner, said in a letter the increase was "sufficiently warranted."

MU Chancellor Brady Deaton said in a statement he was pleased with the decision.

"Having our tuition and budget set now allows us to focus our efforts on our financial aid packages for our incoming and continuing students," Deaton said.

"We are constantly working to preserve our level of excellence at MU while using our financial resources as effectively and efficiently as possible."



Experts offer information request tips

By [Janese Silvey](#)

Missouri's Open Meetings and Records Law is supposed to require governmental agencies to provide public information, but sometimes it takes "ninja-like" strategies to dislodge that data, said David Herzog, a fellow at the Reynolds Journalism Institute at the University of Missouri.

That's because some entities have a few tricks of their own up their sleeves, such as using stall tactics.

"Government agencies put you off," said Mark Horvit, executive director of Investigative Reporters and Editors. "They know most people will go away."

Horvit joined a panel discussion Thursday morning on how to better access public data during a daylong Open Missouri event at the journalism institute. The event attracted mostly reporters, but there were plenty of tips for citizens who want to better understand how to request records.

Some basics:

- Be specific about what you're looking for, said Patricia Churchill, chief counsel of the governmental affairs division within the state's Attorney General's Office.
- Broad requests for general information can be confusing and require more exchanges between the requester and entity, she said. But Churchill warned that making a request too specific can give a public body some room to wiggle out of following the law.
- Public entities can charge for the information, even though Churchill said they're not supposed to charge more than 10 cents per copy and a reasonable amount for finding those copies. The Attorney General's Office has mediated complaints about amounts that seem too high, she said.
- Ask ahead of time for an estimate of those costs and a breakdown of what those charges are for, Horvit said. Otherwise, entities could scare you off with a hefty, unjustifiable fee. Sometimes, he said, "They're not looking for money; they're looking for you to go away."
- Horvit also recommends asking for a decoding document when requesting databases. That allows a responder to understand numbers and letters in the database that otherwise wouldn't make sense.
- If a public body uses a private company to maintain its records, those records are still considered open and it's up to the governmental agency to provide them when requested.
- Remember that custodians of records are human, too, Churchill said, noting that in other jobs, she has received Sunshine Law requests late Friday afternoons that worried her throughout the weekend.

"At times, it feels kind of personal," she said.

Getting your hands on public data could become easier in the future, thanks to a project Herzog is overseeing at RJI. He launched an Open Missouri website Thursday that provides a list of government databases that aren't available online right now. Open Missouri will not only show reporters and citizens where they can look for data not easily accessible but also will create an automatic Sunshine Law request to the agency asking for that data.

The site is free and open for anyone to register. The web address is openmissouri.org.

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Lecture explores violence

Talk is part of MU symposium.

Examining two views on primitive humans' proclivity for violence, Harvard psychology professor Steven Pinker contrasted a quote from 18th-century philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau — "Nothing can be more gentle than man in his primitive state" — against the view of 17th-century philosopher Thomas Hobbes: The life of primitive man was "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short."

"Not to put too fine a point on it," the noted public intellectual told a packed house at the Missouri Theatre last night. "Hobbes was right. Rousseau was wrong."

Pinker proceeded to argue against what he called the misconception that society is more violent today than it has been in the past, presenting data indicating a precipitous drop in per capita violent death through the centuries.

Pinker was in town to headline the seventh-annual MU Life Sciences and Society Symposium, which this year focused on "Ethics and the Brain." Experts in the fields of neurology, anthropology and theology offered free lectures on topics such as neuro-imaging and its implications in the legal system and the brain's development of morals.

Pinker, an expert in language and the mind, is the author of acclaimed works such as "The Language Instinct" and "The Blank Slate: Modern Denial of Human Nature." His talk last night, "A History of Violence," argued that developments such as media and literacy, global commerce and centralized legal systems have led to a systemic decline in the percentage of violent deaths in the population. "Today, we are probably living in the most peaceful time in our society's existence," he told the audience.

Pinker was quick to make the distinction between the sheer numbers of deaths — by that measure, World War II was by far the most violent conflict in history — and the percentage of violent deaths. On a percentage basis, World War II would rank behind periods such as the fall of Rome, the fall of the Ming Dynasty and the Mongol conquests under Genghis Kahn. And since World War II, violent conflict has declined even further.

"There has been a historically unprecedented 65-year period of peace," he said.

The centralization of legal systems tends to correlate with a decline in violent deaths, he said. And the expansion of media and literacy leads to an expansion of empathy by "getting us into the

habit of inhabiting” other people’s minds. That is despite the fact that we enjoy watching violence, he said, referencing Shakespearean dramas, Mel Gibson movies and ice hockey.

The increase in human reason and education also contributes, he said, citing statistics showing those with a higher IQ tend to commit fewer violent acts and have more socially liberal attitudes.

Global commerce’s growth reduces the tendency to violence, turning “zero-sum plunder” into “positive-sum trade, where everyone can win.” That development, he said, suggests a war between China and the United States is unlikely. “We can’t afford to go to war with them; they make all our stuff,” Pinker said. “They can’t go to war with us; we owe them too much money.”

Ethics and the Brain will continue today, with talks on morals and brain imaging at Monsanto Auditorium on the MU campus.

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COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Life Sciences and Society Symposium to focus on neuroscience and ethics

By Rachel Krause

March 18, 2011 | 2:46 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Leading researchers will be at MU this weekend to discuss science and morality.

The seventh annual Life Sciences and Society Symposium: Ethics and the Brain is bringing together experts in neuroscience, law, psychology, philosophy, anthropology and theology to discuss how a person's biology influences decisions. All events are free and open to the public, and registration is encouraged.

Saturday

- "Neurocriminology: Neuroethical and Neurolegal Implications" at 10:30 a.m. in the Conservation Hall foyer at the Anheuser-Busch Natural Resources Building. Adrian Raine, criminology professor at the University of Pennsylvania, will discuss the connection between brain impairments and criminal behavior.
- Panel discussion at 2:50 p.m. in Monsanto Auditorium at the Bond Life Sciences Center. The panel will include Adrian Raine of the University of Pennsylvania; Adam Kolber, law professor at Brooklyn Law School; and Nancey Murphy, theology professor at Fuller Theological Seminary.
- "History of Violence" keynote address at 7 p.m. at the Missouri Theatre Center for the Arts. Steven Pinker, Harvard University psychology professor, will discuss why the public perceives crime to be on the rise, despite its actual historical decline.

Sunday

- "How the Mind Makes Morals" at 9 a.m. in Monsanto Auditorium. Patricia Churchland, philosophy professor at the University of California-San Diego, will discuss how the brain influences human concerns about others' well-being.

- "Getting Mad About the Bad: Emotion and the Moral Brain" at 11:30 a.m. in Monsanto Auditorium. Jesse Prinz, philosophy professor at the City University of New York, will discuss the role emotions and reason play in decision-making.
- Panel discussion at 12:30 p.m. in Monsanto Auditorium. The panel will include Patricia Churchland of the University of California-San Diego; Joseph Dumit, anthropology professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; and Jesse Prinz of the City University of New York.

Event registration is free, and it is required for lunch and refreshments. For more information, a complete schedule of events and registration, visit the [symposium website](#).

MU professor helps save tropical kingfisher

By **JANESE SILVEY**

Published: 12:00 PM CST on 03/11/2011

When Dylan Kesler began looking into a diminishing population of birds on the island of Niau in the South Pacific, residents there weren't sure why he was so interested. After all, they didn't realize the colorful tropical birds they saw every day were on the verge of extinction.



That was in 2005. Today, thanks to Kesler's work in the area, Niau has made the Tuamotu kingfisher its official island logo. Children sing songs and write poems about the bird. And coconut farmers are making small changes to their practices to ensure the birds' survival

Kesler is an assistant professor in fisheries and wildlife at the University of Missouri's School of Natural Resources in the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources. He's been to Niau five times studying and tracking the

birds.

There are fewer than 125 Tuamotu kingfisher on the island, which is actually an atoll, or coral reef that surrounds a lagoon. The bird has bright blue feathers and is a kin to the Belted Kingfisher found in the United States, said Allison Cox, a graduate student on Kesler's research team who went to Niau twice last year.

"They're not intimidated by humans and often perch low, so they'll squawk at you when you're near their home," she said. "They're sassy."

The birds eat lizards and hunt from the ground and from trees, where they perch before dropping and landing on prey. "Because it has lived in isolation for a very long time, it's unlike any other bird. There is no other bird like this on the planet," Kesler said.

Ultimately, though, the goal is to transport and create a second population of Tuamotu kingfisher on another island.

Until that happens, Kesler has provided some guidelines farmers and residents can follow to make survival easier. For instance, farmers can practice controlled, intermediate fires on farmland to expose more ground and let the birds better spot prey.

Farmers also are asked to refrain from cutting down dead coconut trees, which make good nesting areas.

"It's the most amazing thing," Cox said. "When they're building a nest, the male and female will get on a high perch and take turns diving straight forward with their beaks into a dead coconut tree."

Kesler's studies of the bird's habitat characteristics are being published in the American Ornithologists' Union journal *The Auk* and in the *Journal of Wildlife Management*.

Kesler's work has been funded by French Polynesia and several organizations, including the Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund. The latter also has successfully boosted the population of a similar species, the Micronesian kingfisher through a long-term captive breeding program.

So why care whether the Tuamotu kingfisher survives?

Although Kesler said he isn't sure how the extinction would affect the area, upsetting the ecosystem, in general, isn't a good idea, he said.

"We don't necessarily know the links between all of the species in ecology," he said.

That's especially true of the ecology on the more than 70 atolls that form the Tuamotu Archipelago in French Polynesia. If ocean levels continue to rise, many of these islands eventually will become covered by water, so it's important to maintain the integrity of the systems that remain intact, Kesler said.

And, although there might not be a direct economic impact from this species' extinction, it's generally smart to preserve plants and animals for their potential medical value later, he said.

Plus, the bird is valuable just because it is, Kesler said.

"These are very important because they're important," he said. "From the creationist perspective, God created them or because they represent 50,000 years of evolution."

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Luetkemeyer gets lesson at university

Engineering dean pitches sciences.

By **RUDI KELLER**

When U.S. Rep. Blaine Luetkemeyer visited the University of Missouri's College of Engineering yesterday, Dean James Thompson had some homework for the lawmaker.

First, he gave Luetkemeyer a copy of "The World is Flat" by New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman. The book on globalization, Thompson said, shows how far the United States has fallen behind nations such as India and China in math, science and engineering education.

Thompson also gave Luetkemeyer a copy of "Caught in the Middle" by Richard C. Longworth, about the problems and opportunities the modern economy poses for states in the Midwest.

The Longworth book, Thompson said, explains how colleges and universities in the Midwest are being systematically starved of the money needed to prepare students for technology jobs.

And the Friedman book, along with recent experiences of MU engineering faculty who have visited the Far East, shows that China, India and South Korea are making enormous investments. "We are losing our edge," Thompson said. "If we want to have the standard of living in this country, we have to innovate. If we want to innovate, we have to have the talent."

MU is still able to do cutting-edge research, he said. Thompson personally is engaged in researching highly classified directed energy weapons — or, in the parlance of science fiction, death rays — for the military. But China is catching up, with three times the number of scientists dedicated to the problem, and that could spell trouble for the U.S., Thompson said.

One of the most telling statistics about the problem, Thompson said, is that in Singapore and China, more than one-third of all college students study engineering. In the United States, the engineering share is 4.5 percent, which ties our country with Mozambique, he said.

Shoring up engineering education and making the investments that will attract more students is a long-term issue, Luetkemeyer said. But the problem in Washington and Jefferson City, he said, is that politicians are more concerned with short-term issues. That was true this week when Congress passed a spending measure to keep the government functioning for three weeks. "We need more long-term planning," Luetkemeyer said. "In the political world, unfortunately, that is not the way it works. Short-term pain is not something people want to endure."

With federal deficits expected to equal 40 percent of the budget next year, the first step is to restrain spending, not add more for any reason, he said. The Republican-controlled House wants to put federal spending back at the 2008 level, he said.

“Then, surgically, you take out the programs that are not working,” Luetkemeyer said. “If you are able to hold your 2008 funding levels, that is where your highest expectation should be.”

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Top Senate leader says to prepare for cuts

Budget stalled over U.S. funds.

By **RUDI KELLER**

Published: 11:26 a.m. 3/26/11

NO MU MENTION

JEFFERSON CITY — The Senate impasse over using federal funds means it's time to start looking for places to cut as much as \$500 million from the state budget over the next two years, the Senate's top leader said yesterday.

Speaking with reporters after the Senate finished work in advance of lawmakers' annual spring break, Senate President Pro Tem Rob Mayer said he doesn't have much hope of passing a bill to use \$189 million of federal education funds. The bill would make up a \$24 million shortfall in school funding this year and is vital in preventing cuts in the coming year either to education or to other departments that have already seen major reductions, **including higher education.**

The question, Mayer, R-Dexter, said, is "can we get consensus on the tough decisions we have to make?"

The effort to find cuts will, as much as possible, exclude elementary, secondary and higher education, Mayer said. And he stressed it will be a two-year process. "We don't come up with those kinds of reductions in one year," he said.

While Mayer is looking for cuts, Sen. Kurt Schaefer, R-Columbia and chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, said he still believes it is possible to pass a bill to use the education funds. "That is what I am looking at," Schaefer said. "If someone else has an alternate plan, I haven't heard it."

And House Speaker Steve Tilley said Senate inaction on the education funding makes balancing the state budget "very difficult."

"The House was pretty clear that we felt the education money" should be used, said Tilley, R-Perryville.

The House will begin debating the full \$23.2 billion budget for the coming year on March 28, when lawmakers return to work. That spending plan, as it is now written, would use the \$165 million in education funding to keep basic aid to public schools steady for the coming year.

The House voted to use the money, and the budget will reflect that, Tilley said. "I can't help it if the Senate is holding it up," he said.

For the third year in a row, the state budget for the coming year will be balanced using an infusion of federal help. The first round of aid was federal budget stabilization funds used over the past two years, and \$65 million of that money is still available.

In August, Congress approved additional money, including the \$189 million for education, in an effort to continue shoring up state budgets and prevent layoffs in public schools. Without those funds and other sources of federal aid, the budget for the coming year would need \$400 million in additional cuts, Schaefer said.

"That hole has basically been put off for a little bit longer," he said.

State revenues, although growing again, are far below the levels of just a few years ago, Mayer said, explaining why additional cuts will be needed. Current projections show state general revenue will not return to its 2008 levels until 2014, he said.

A group of conservatives, led by Sen. Jim Lembke, R-St. Louis, has filibustered the use of federal money to extend unemployment benefits, and the group's threat of a filibuster has blocked Senate debate on the supplemental spending bill that uses the education funds. The House passed the bill in February.

"I am ready to take it up," Schaefer said. "I am sure there will be lots of discussion on it. Hopefully, it won't ever come to that point, and we will have a nice discussion and vote on the bill."

The Senate could, by a majority vote, cut off debate and force a vote on the education funding or jobless benefits. Mayer said he is not ready to take that step.

"Before we resort to tougher measures, I will sit down with that group of senators," he said.

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ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Letters to the editor, March 19

Keeping people safe

In the wake of the earthquake and tsunami in Japan, the emergency at the Fukushima-Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant has captured the world's attention. Engineers are important to society, especially the engineers working at the troubled Fukushima plant. Other engineers are working to ensure the safety and well-being of the public.

The reactors were shut down after the earthquake and tsunami, as designed. Reactors continue to generate significant heat after shutdown, so continued cooling is required. External power was swept away by the tsunami, but on-site backup power was provided by diesel generators (two, one to back up the other). Unfortunately, the generators were damaged, too. The additional backup included batteries, which kept the reactors cool — until the batteries were exhausted and the site was completely blacked out. Some core damage resulted before portable diesel generators restored power.

Unfortunately, the heating required venting of the containment and a small radiation release was needed to prevent an explosion that would release a lot of radiation. In the reactor, hydrogen from the venting can build up and lead to a hydrogen explosion. This is what caused the Japanese reactor building to collapse, but the containment around the reactor and reactor pressure vessel held as they were designed to do. Then seawater was pumped in for cooling, which is a drastic but necessary step to ensure public safety.

Engineers and reactor operators worked heroically around the clock to maintain barriers between the radioactive core and the public. These individuals worked while their houses were being swept away, perhaps not knowing if their families were safe. Engineers designed the plant's safety systems that averted an even larger disaster.

Engineers easily forget how important our profession is to society, and we can forget how serious the practice of engineering can be. There are no television shows dedicated to the heroic efforts of engineers.

People may not understand "what we do," but, as the efforts of our brother and sister engineers in Japan show, we work selflessly, we keep people safe and we do good.

Please join me in keeping these heroic engineers in our thoughts.

Scott Kovaleski • Columbia, Mo. Associate Professor, Electrical and Computer Engineering Department, University of Missouri

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

MU professors agree: Radiation from Japan will not harm US

By David Cawthon

March 18, 2011 | 9:31 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA – Experts, officials and MU professors concur that the nuclear problems in Japan will have no effect on the U.S., and the threat of a nuclear catastrophe is unlikely.

According to a March 18 Reuters article, the International Atomic Energy Agency in Japan discovered no health threats as of Friday evening. While fallout from the plant has reached southern California, the numbers are "about a billion times beneath levels that would be health threatening," a diplomat said in a March 18 Associated Press article.

"I'm sure there will be some instruments in the U.S. that will pick up something," said William Miller, an MU professor of nuclear engineering. "That doesn't imply that there is some sort of health risk."

According to a March 17 New York Times article, the precarious situation has left fuel rods in two overheated reactors exposed to the air. Water pumps that cool the overheating rods are not receiving power because of the tsunami and 9.0-magnitude earthquake that rattled the country, decreasing the water levels in the storage pools, the article stated.

Workers are monitoring the situation and utilizing different methods to prevent overheating, according to the article.

While experts are not labeling the disaster a serious threat, the situation has people around the world concerned about how a potential meltdown could affect them. Even in Tokyo, the chances of a full nuclear meltdown in a worst-case scenario are unlikely, said Sudarshan Loyalka, an MU nuclear engineering professor.

"Not only the U.S., but Japan is not in danger," Loyalka said. "They have evacuated people, taken safety precautions, and it was in their plans because they realized this could happen."

While the situation is still serious, it won't reach the proportions of the Chernobyl incident, labeled as the worst nuclear disaster in history, according to a March 18 CBS News article. Chernobyl occurred in the old Soviet Union in April 1986 and leaked radioactive iodine into the air, causing health problems for those exposed to the radiation, according to a March 16 New York Times blog.

"(Japan) won't be another Chernobyl because they have containment buildings over their reactors, which they did not have at Chernobyl," Miller said.

Miller said Japan's reactors, like the U.S.'s, safely shut down when there is a major problem.

"Chernobyl tried to shut itself down after it blew itself apart," he said. "It's a very different situation with (Japan's) reactors."

Loyalka said current practices are helping prevent such crises in the U.S. Because of the disaster, officials are making plans to re-examine plants across the country.

"The U.S. should definitely revisit plants of this type and other types to see if there are any things we can improve upon," Loyalka said. "That's why the inspections and reviews were created. The industry has already been doing this for some time."

Missouri residents have little to fear about seismic activity affecting Callaway County's nuclear plant, Loyalka added.

"We could have earthquakes here, sure," he said, "but the reactor has been designed to withstand earthquakes that have happened historically in this area."

Miller also said the plant in Callaway County is designed to handle the seismic activity from the New Madrid Fault that runs through southeast Missouri. At this time, there is nothing for Americans to worry about from the Japanese crisis, he said.

"I hope that the public understands that the risk in the United States is absolute zero," he said. "There is going to be some impact on people in the immediate vicinity of the Japanese plant, but with the shelter and the evacuation, the long-term health effects are going to be small."

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Letters to the editor, March 20

Posted: Sunday, March 20, 2011 12:00 am | [\(2\) Comments](#)

Sensational coverage of reactors overshadows suffering of Japanese

The media have sensationalized Japan's problem with one cluster of 40-year-old nuclear power plants after the recent earthquake and tsunami while ignoring everything else. This is a great disservice to everyone, including the Japanese and the American public.

This was a huge natural disaster for Japan. Entire towns vanished in the tsunami. In a country noted for earthquake preparedness, the death toll may exceed 10,000. The power plant problems are a minor side note. Nobody has been killed at the plants, and the minimal radiation leakage is unlikely to cause even minor health issues. The plants survived the earthquake intact, and only the record 30-foot tsunami did any damage because it over-topped the existing 25-foot tsunami wall and disrupted diesel power to the plants, which shut down safely, as designed.

The Japanese government is coping with the nuclear aspects of this disaster very competently. The result for the power plants probably will be nothing more than that some valuable equipment was damaged or destroyed. Let us not forget those already dead from all of the other causes and that more than 200,000 people now are essentially homeless and without adequate food and water in the middle of winter in an area even farther north than St. Louis.

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