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ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

MISSOURIAN

Nixon dumps idea of tapping 5 universities' reserves

MU MENTION 2

Gov. Jay Nixon said Thursday that he will not tap university reserves to help balance Missouri's budget, scrapping the idea just a few weeks after its debut generated a generally negative reaction.

Nixon's administration had floated an idea that would have taken \$106 million from the reserves of five of Missouri's largest universities to help fund the higher education operating budget for the 2013 fiscal year. The reserves would have been replenished over several years with money from Missouri's student loan agency.

Asked Thursday about the idea, Nixon responded: "That is off the table."

The idea had not gone over well with some university officials and state lawmakers, whose approval would have been needed.

On Wednesday, House Speaker Steven Tilley had vowed that lawmakers "will not balance our budget by asking our state colleges and universities for a bailout."

Nixon said Thursday that he would continue to look for ways to put as many dollars as possible into the classrooms at K-12 public schools, colleges and universities _ directing cuts toward the administration, as much as possible.

The governor's office has always stressed that the potential to borrow from university reserves to finance the state's budget was only an idea, not a firm plan or proposal. One thing that made the idea potentially attractive was the ability to redirect money from the Missouri Higher Education Loan Authority to finance classroom education in the immediate future instead of using agency funds for longer-term campus construction projects, as a 2007 state law requires, Nixon said.

But some lawmakers had expressed concern about whether the authority could afford to replenish university reserves. The Chesterfield-based student loan agency has skipped many of its scheduled quarterly payments to the state under the 2007 college construction law, citing concerns about its own finances.

Lawmakers were pleased to hear Thursday that Nixon had dropped the idea.

"I'm glad it's off the table. It was a ridiculous plan to begin with," said House Budget Committee Chairman Ryan Silvey, R-Kansas City.

Senate President Pro Tem Rob Mayer, R-Dexter, said colleagues in his chamber generally opposed dipping into university reserves to finance operating budgets.

"We just didn't think it was a good way to deal with the problem. Why rob Peter to pay Peter?" Mayer said.

At least some university officials had been open to the idea as a way to prevent a sharp drop in state funding from which it could take several years to bounce back.

"It was a concept that we thought was intriguing and had at least enough merit to look at in more detail," said Paul Kincaid, chief of staff to Interim President Clif Smart at Missouri State University.

Under Nixon's idea, the University of Missouri system would have been asked to provide the state \$62.3 million from its reserves, Missouri State University would have supplied \$13.7 million, and \$10 million each would come from the University of Central Missouri, Southeast Missouri State University and Truman State University.

University of Missouri Interim President Steve Owens said in an emailed statement that officials at his four-campus system would continue working with the governor and Legislature to find ways to adequately fund higher education.

"We appreciate the governor's concern for higher education and the creativity of the idea floated by his office," Owens said.

Public relations personnel at the three other institutions either declined to comment or said officials were unavailable for comment Thursday.

Nixon's budget director has said the state could face a roughly \$500 million gap between projected expenses and revenues for the 2013 fiscal year that starts July 1. That gap was the impetus for considering alternative ways of financing higher education.

"We wanted to look at an opportunity with the immediate budget challenge we had this year," Nixon said. He added: "That was one method that was looked at. It didn't pan out."



House GOP considers options for revenue

NO MU Mention

By Rudi Keller

Thursday, January 5, 2012

JEFFERSON CITY — Normally tax-averse Republicans, facing a budget that will require cuts of \$450 million or more to balance, did not close the door yesterday on finding new revenue but said they draw the line at higher tax rates.

House Speaker Steve Tilley, at the House Republicans' opening-day news conference, emphatically rejected the idea of raising Missouri's 17-cents-a-pack cigarette tax, the lowest in the nation. "A cigarette tax increase is not something that will pass the House while I am speaker," he said.

But when he addressed taxing Internet sales, his tone softened.

"I see both sides of that issue," Tilley said. "I see a fairness side. ... In my community of Perryville, the Main Street stores are having to collect sales tax, but the Internet-based companies are not. I think that is something we should have a discussion on ... but our caucus will make a decision on that as a whole."

It is difficult to know exactly how much revenue state and local governments would see from an Internet sales tax. Studies cited in a fiscal note for a similar idea last year estimated new state revenue at \$108 million to \$210 million. The bill would have put Missouri in a multistate compact called the "Streamlined Sales Tax," which would implement administrative changes in tax collection designed to make it easier to collect tax for multiple jurisdictions.

A bill executing the agreement, with other significant tax changes as well, has been introduced in the House by Rep. Rick Brattin, R-Harrisonville.

Missouri is facing the worst budget crisis since the recession began in 2007. The \$23.2 billion state budget has been propped up for three years by federal funds provided in the 2009 stimulus bill and other legislation. That money is now gone and state revenue has not rebounded enough to make up the difference.

Even with the federal help, aid to state colleges and universities has been cut by almost 12.5 percent over the past two years. A cut of that amount or more in one year is possible when Gov. Jay Nixon proposes his budget for the year that begins July 1.

If Tilley and the GOP caucus decide to move ahead with taxing Internet sales, they won't have to persuade Democrats. House Minority Leader Mike Talboy of Kansas City said he sees a growing demand for state government to fund budget areas that have been cut in recent years.

"You can't cut your way to prosperity," Talboy said at the Democrats' news conference.

Under state law, retailers have no obligation to collect sales tax if they have no physical presence in the state. These companies, manufacturers and large retailers such as Amazon compete with thousands of small Missouri businesses.

When Missourians make purchases from companies that do not collect tax, they are supposed to report the purchases and pay what is known as a use tax, but few do.

While Tilley is approaching the issue with an open mind, Senate President Pro Tem Rob Mayer, R-Dexter, questioned whether any measure that creates a new way of taxing Missourians is wise. He cited the overall weakness in the economy as his main objection.

"Now is not the time to talk about increasing the tax burden on any segment of society," Mayer said.

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IT WAS ALWAYS ABOUT THE MONEY.

When the University of Missouri announced it would leave the Big 12 to join the Southeastern Conference, Chancellor Brady Deaton offered up reasons for the move that made the deal sound more like a corporate merger than a change in athletic affiliation.

"We were looking for long-term stability as a university and who we were associated with," Deaton says. "Who we were going to develop long-term partnerships with so we could have financial security in our planning."

College athletics is big business these days, a lucrative enterprise that impacts the Columbia economy to the tune of \$118 million a year. The deals brokered in the boardroom carry as much import as the efforts on the playing field, with longer-lasting effect. Deaton's decision to switch the university's athletic affiliation in July will give MU an immediate boost from league-generated revenue and provide greater exposure for branding opportunities. These profitable perks are expected to spill over into the local economy.

WHEN MIZZOU becomes a member of the SEC on July 1, 2012, it will join the most profitable conference in college athletics. MU's share of league revenue will be equal to all other SEC members.

"When you are a member of the SEC, you are a member in every sense of the word," SEC Commissioner Mike Slive says. "We share financially, we share in decision-making, and we share everything that we do in an equal way."

The cut from the SEC promises to be a substantial upgrade to Mizzou's athletic income from the Big 12 Conference. Last year's SEC take-home was \$18.3 million for each member from league revenue. That's reportedly about \$8 million more than Missouri received from the Big 12 last year in league-generated revenue.

Media rights to SEC broadcasts have fueled the conference's rich revenue base. Last fall the league began 15-year agreements with CBS and ESPN that make the SEC the most widely distributed conference on television. The landmark deal follows a surge of success for SEC teams across the athletic spectrum: six consecutive BCS national championships in football, three consecutive College World Series championships in baseball and back-to-back national championships in men's indoor track and field. In the 2010-11 season, SEC teams won five national titles and finished as runner-up in three more.

"This is an opportunity," Deaton says, "to fulfill the expectations and the promise and the potential of the University of Missouri in a way that we have not had the opportunity in the past. We're moving to one of the fastest-growing regions and one of the most illustrious athletic conferences in the nation in the

Southeastern Conference. We are proud to be where we are."

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI athletic events wield a significant impact on the Columbia economy. According to

an analysis by MU graduate students, events hosted by the Mizzou Athletics Department and its facilities accounted for about \$118.7 million in additional spending within Columbia during the 2009-2010 fiscal year. Local boosters are hoping the excitement over this new association will trump the loss of traditional affiliations and translate into additional prosperity.

Indeed, economic development is part of the university mission.

"We made the decision based on the best interests of the future of the University of Missouri," says Deaton. "Given the 170-plus years of partnership between MU and the Columbia community, we understand that our interests are forever mutual. We want MU's success to be Columbia's also. As Mizzou becomes



part of the SEC family, we want Columbia to share equally in enhanced economic opportunities and increased visibility."

Economic impact was one of the factors that went into the SEC decision, says Tim Hickman, MU's senior associate athletic director for operations. "A strong community and local economy is important to the university," Hickman says. "We believe that the move to the SEC will bring more out-of-town guests to our home games and give the university and Columbia more national exposure via television and media coverage."

Out-of-town fans are a prized commodity: they spend more than twice as much money on the game-day experience here as locals do. About 65 percent of ticketholders to MU sporting events are from out-of-town, Hickman says, and he estimates that percentage will rise slightly with the new conference affiliation. SEC fans are reputedly "good travelers": that reputation will soon be tested to see if it holds up in the face of longer travel distances between Columbia and SEC towns. Traffic at Columbia Regional Airport could see a bump in passengers

who prefer to cover those long distances by air.

SEC fans are the best at filling a stadium. The conference leads the nation in football attendance. In 2010, more than 6.5 million fans flocked to SEC games, averaging 76,719 per game and filling stadiums to 98.51 percent of capacity. And for every dollar those fans will spend on direct revenue in the MU stadium, \$1.64 recirculates in the Columbia economy.

MU's Memorial Stadium capacity of 71,000 ranks 10th among SEC members and its \$48.8 million athletic budget is 11th. A new master plan for athletic facilities has been in the works since last spring, Hickman says. "We feel that we must always look to keep our facilities up-to-date and state-of-the-art, regardless of conference," he says. "We do feel however, that the move to the SEC and the excitement that surrounds that will expedite the fundraising efforts and get us moving quicker."

Athletic officials have identified priorities for improvements that will cost about \$100 million. "In no particular order," Hickman says, they include:

Football: A \$30 to \$40 million project to add premium

could bode well for weekend viewership of the mid-Missouri station.

"Anytime you have more people watching you, it's a good thing," says KRCG general manager Jon Van Ness. "College sports doesn't drive a whole lot of revenue for the station, so it won't be an economic bonanza for us, but it's a nice opportunity to serve mid-Missouri. We could see some upticks and there will be opportunities for promotions — we're always trying to find unique and better ways to serve our audience."

THE SWITCH to the SEC does have its downside. For the Missouri wrestling team, one of MU's most successful athletic programs in recent years, the search is on for a new conference home since the SEC does not support wrestling as a conference sport. Mizzou is slated this year to host the Big 12 wrestling championships in the Hearnest Center and follow up with hosting duties at the NCAA wrestling tournament in St. Louis.

"Coach Brian Smith is working on securing a new conference home for the Tigers," says athletic department spokesman Chad Moeller. "Details are not yet finalized, but we are confident that we will wind up in a great position that will help Coach continue to keep Mizzou among the top programs in the country."

For traditionalists, the greatest loss in leaving the Big 12 is the suspension of the Missouri-Kansas rivalry. The two schools haven't played home-and-home football games since 2007, instead meeting in Kansas City's Arrowhead Stadium. Although the contract with Arrowhead runs through 2012, University of Kansas officials have indicated they have no interest in continuing the 119-year-old series after Missouri exits the Big 12 this summer.

"We have been very clear with our desire to continue our rivalry in all sports," Moeller says, "but Kansas has been very adamant publicly about not having an interest in playing. If Kansas

isn't interested, there's not much we can do."

Attendance at the game in Arrowhead has fallen off considerably in recent years after tremendous ticket sales for the first two games played there.

DEATON SAYS that "nothing is going away. The good thing is, here we are expanding the excitement. We heard from the fan base and we heard the potential of expanding our facilities if the fan base responds. That's all good for the state of Missouri."

His "good for the goose, good for the gander" approach projects the university will inject even more resources into the state, calling the move to the SEC "a major positive step forward for the Missouri economy as well."

Let's call it a merger of hope and promise.

"This is our shot," MU football coach Gary Pinkel told a group of reporters in early December. "The University of Missouri's got an opportunity now."

seat options that would likely include outdoor seating accessible to an indoor club, most likely in a new structure on the east side of the stadium; renovate the current press box and suites, and Touchdown Terrace; ongoing maintenance and structural repairs

Tennis: Upgrade and expand the outdoor courts and renovate the Green Tennis Center

Golf: Build a team facility to include offices, meeting space and practice bays

Softball: Expand seating and team facilities

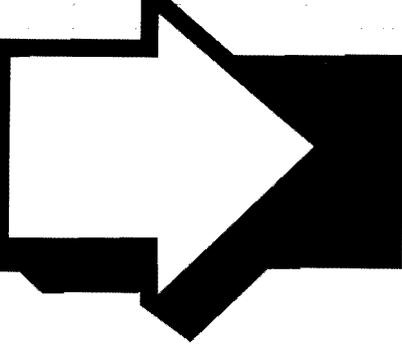
Baseball: Add offices and new team facilities

"WE HAVE NOT defined our overall timeframe yet, as much is dependent on our fundraising," Hickman says. "But we definitely have some donors who have expressed their excitement about the SEC move."

Viewers of local CBS affiliate KRCG are excited as well, since SEC games air on channel 13. And that local interest



**A LOOK AT COLUMBIA'S
NEW PEER COMMUNITIES
OF THE SEC**



HEY,



▶ **COLUMBIA,
MISSOURI**

Population: 108,500
Median Household Income: \$40,816
Median Home Value: \$164,900
Major Industries: health care; education; insurance

Home to the flagship campus of the **University of Missouri**, Columbia is known as Collegetown USA, a reference to the six colleges with facilities here. Mizzou's student population is by far the largest of the six with 33,805 students. Dominant economic sectors include education, life sciences, animal and human health, information technology and insurance. Major employers include the University of Missouri, University Hospital & Clinics, Boone Hospital Center, Shelter Insurance, MBS Textbook Exchange, IBM and State Farm Insurance. Columbia Regional Airport offers Delta Air Lines connector service to and from Memphis.

Columbia ranks No. 8 on *Forbes* magazine's Best Places for Business & Careers.

▶ **TUSCALOOSA,
ALABAMA**

(620 miles from Columbia)
Population: 90,468
Median Household Income: \$33,362
Median Home Value: \$158,700
Major Industries: education and health care; manufacturing; retail

Located on the banks of the Black Warrior River, Tuscaloosa serves as western Alabama's regional center of industry and commerce. The city is home to more than 31,000 students of the **University of Alabama**, plus two other colleges.

Major employers in Tuscaloosa's \$8.8 billion economy include the University of Alabama, DCH Health System, DCH Regional Medical Center, Northport Medical Center, Bryce Hospital, Partlow Developmental Center, Veterans Administration Medical Center, Mercedes-Benz U.S. International, Uniroyal Goodrich Tire Manufacturing (Michelin), Hunt Refining, Corus Tuscaloosa (British Steel), Gulf States Paper Corp. and Johnson Controls. Tuscaloosa Regional Airport has no commercial passenger airline service.

The city was named to *Fortune Small Business* magazine's list of The 50 Best Places to Launch A Business in 2009.

The community is still recovering from a devastating EF4 tornado that tore through Tuscaloosa on April 27, 2011. The tornado killed 50 people and damaged 5,300 homes and 600 businesses.

▶ **FAYETTEVILLE,
ARKANSAS**

(315 miles from Columbia)
Population: 73,580
Median Household Income: \$35,365
Median Home Value: \$175,800
Major Industries: education and health care; recreation and tourism; retail

Nestled in the Boston range of the Ozarks, Fayetteville is the third-largest city in Arkansas and the seat of government for Washington County. It is home to the **University of Arkansas** and its 23,000 students.

The \$18 billion economy of the Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers metro area is bolstered by corporate giants Wal-Mart, Tyson Foods and JB Hunt. Fayetteville's major employers include the University of Arkansas, Washington Regional Medical Center, Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Superior Industries, Arvest Bank, Ayrshire Electronics and Arkansas Western Gas.

Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport in Highfill serves the area with 10 carriers.

Forbes magazine ranks Fayetteville as the seventh best college sports town and eighth on its list of Best Places For Business And Careers. The city is No. 7 on Kiplinger's 2008 *Best Cities to Work, Live and Play*.

NEIGHBOR!

▶ AUBURN, ALABAMA

(730 miles from Columbia)

Population: 53,380

Median Household Income: \$35,500

Median Home Value: \$215,100

Major Industries: education; research; manufacturing

The fastest-growing metropolitan area in Alabama is home to **Auburn University** and its 25,469 students. The economy centers on the university and affiliated services with an industrial base of mid-sized, high-tech manufacturing and research firms. Auburn has four technology parks where the industrial focus is on the manufacture of small engines, automotive wheels, fuel cells, plastic injection technology and vehicle armor. The city is located between two automobile manufacturing plants: Kia Motors about 35 miles east and Hyundai Motors about 55 miles west.

The closest commercial airports are two hours away in Atlanta or Birmingham.

Southern Living magazine lists Auburn as One of the South's Best College Towns. The city ranks No. 6 on *Forbes* magazine's list of Best Small Places for Business and Careers.

▶ GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA

(1,000 miles from Columbia)

Population: 124,354

Median Household Income: \$31,208

Median Home Value: \$169,200

Major Industries: education; health care; social assistance; entertainment and recreation; retail

The Gainesville campus of the **University of Florida** is the sixth-largest in the country, with an enrollment of 50,116. Gainesville enjoys a low cost of living, but that is offset by high property taxes. Santa Fe College is also located in Gainesville. Major employers include the University of Florida, Shands Healthcare System, the city government, Nationwide Insurance and CH2M Hill engineering and construction. Gainesville Regional Airport offers daily service to Atlanta, Miami and Charlotte, N.C.

In 2007, Gainesville ranked as one of the Best Places to Live and Play by *National Geographic Adventure*; the National Coalition for the Homeless calls it the "Fifth Meanest City in the USA."

Gatorade was invented by University of Florida researchers in Gainesville, but the beverage's headquarters is now located near Chicago.

ATHENS, GEORGIA

(735 miles from Columbia)

Population: 115,452

Median Household

Income: \$33,750

Median Home Value: \$163,800

Major Industries: education; health and social services; poultry; timber

The **University of Georgia** anchors the economy of the unified city-county Athens-Clarke County with an enrollment of 34,885 students. Athens Technical College and Piedmont College also offer educational services in the city.

Major employers include the university, Athens Technical College, St. Mary's Health Care System, Athens Regional Medical Center, pharmaceutical maker Merial and RAI Steel. The closest air service is Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport.

In 1980, Athens became a Main Street City, one of the first in Georgia to embark on a downtown revitalization program through the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

▶ LEXINGTON, KENTUCKY

(460 miles from Columbia)

Population: 295,803

Median Household Income: \$47,104

Median Home Value: \$159,300

Major Industries: education; technology; manufacturing

The "Horse Capital of the World" is the setting for the **University of Kentucky**, which has a student population of 27,209. The city's largest employer is the University of Kentucky; other major businesses include Lexmark International, Tempur-Pedic, Hewlett-Packard, Trane, International, Kentucky Horse Park, Keeneland race course, Red Mile race course, Transylvania University and Bluegrass Community & Technical College. A Toyota factory is in adjoining Georgetown. The Jif plant produces more peanut butter than any other facility in the world.

The city's Bluegrass Airport offers about 65 commercial passenger flights daily through seven airlines.

Lexington ranks fifth on *Forbes'* list of Best Cities for Businesses and Careers, and on Kiplinger's list of Best Cities for Young Professionals.

COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA

(875 miles from Columbia)
Population: 129,272
Median Household Income: \$36,546
Median Home Value: \$156,300
Major Industries: state government; education; health care; retail; waste management

That "other Columbia" is South Carolina's state capital and largest city, home to the **University of South Carolina** and its 29,597 students. Major employers are the Palmetto Health hospital system, Blue Cross Blue Shield of SC and the University of South Carolina. Columbia is also the headquarters of SCANA, a Fortune 500 energy company, Colonial Supplemental Insurance, Ritedose Corp. and AgFirst Farm Credit Bank. Nearby Fort Jackson is the U.S. Army's largest training installation.

Five airlines service the Columbia Metropolitan Airport.

BusinessWeek ranks Columbia, S.C., 14th on its list of 40 Strongest U.S. Metro Economies. CNNMoney.com named the city one of America's 25 best places to retire.

KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE

(610 miles from Columbia)
Population: 178,874
Median Household Income: \$31,994
Median Home Value: \$116,400
Major Industries: education; research; technology; warehousing and distribution

The Tennessee River forms along the Appalachian Ridge in Knoxville, home of the **University of Tennessee** and its 27,523 students. The area's economy is fueled by Oak Ridge National Laboratory and other Department of Energy installations, the National Transportation Research Center and the Tennessee Valley Authority.

Companies headquartered in Knoxville include AC Entertainment, Bush Brothers & Co., Verizon retailer Cellular Sales, DeRoyal Industries, Pilot Corp., Sea Ray and Weigel's. McGhee Tyson Airport is adjacent to an Air National Guard base and provides commercial passenger air service from numerous carriers.

In 2008, *Forbes* named Knoxville among the Top 10 Metropolitan Hotspots in the United States.

Knoxville was once known as the "Underwear Capital of the World" because of the city's 20 textile and clothing mills that employed more residents in the 1930s than any other industry.

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

(435 miles from Columbia)
Population: 601,222
Median Household Income: \$44,630
Median Home Value: \$166,800
Major Industries: music recording and production; tourism; health care; automotive manufacturing; insurance; finance; publishing

The state capital of Tennessee is best known by its nickname "Music City." The country music mecca on the banks of the Cumberland River is also the home of **Vanderbilt University**. With 12,714 students, it is the smallest school in the Southeastern Conference, yet Vanderbilt is the single largest employer in Nashville.

Nashville's renown in country music is eclipsed locally by health care, the city's largest industry. Major employers include Hospital Corporation of America, Nissan North America, Gaylord Entertainment, Cracker Barrel, Dell and Dollar General.

Nashville International Airport serves the area and is a mini-hub for Southwest Airlines.

The city's most popular tourist attractions are the Grand Ole Opry, the world's longest running live radio show, and the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum.

COLLEGE STATION, TEXAS

(780 miles from Columbia)
Population: 93,857
Median Household Income: \$32,297
Median Home Value: \$174,700
Major Industries: education; health care; telecommunications; utilities; construction

Mizzou's fellow Big 12 refugee, **Texas A&M University**, is in College Station, a city located within the most populated region of Texas, near three of the 10 largest cities in the United States — Houston, Dallas and San Antonio. Texas A&M's students attend classes on the College Station campus; the adjacent city of Bryan combines to form a metropolitan area of 228,660.

College Station's major employer is the university; others include Sanderson Farms, St. Joseph Regional Medical Center, Reynolds and Reynolds, and Alenco Holding Co.

Easterwood Airport is located on the Texas A&M campus and offers multiple daily flights to Dallas and Houston.

The size of the Texas A&M student population (46,422 students) brought College Station honors from *Money* magazine in 2006 as the most educated city in Texas and the 11th most educated city in the United States. 

BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA

(750 miles from Columbia)

Population: 229,493

Median Household Income:
\$36,816

Median Home Value:
\$153,400

Major Industries:
petrochemical production
and manufacturing; state
government; educational
services; health care

The mighty Mississippi rolls past the state capital of Louisiana on its way to New Orleans and the Gulf of Mexico. **Louisiana State University** and its 28,871 students call this river port home. Baton Rouge is a major industrial, petrochemical, medical and research center of the South. Its port is the farthest inland port on the Mississippi River that can accommodate ocean-going tankers and cargo carriers. The ExxonMobil facility is the second-largest oil refinery in the country and one of the 10 largest in the world.

Major employers include the state, LSU, Turner Industries, ExxonMobil Chemical, the Shaw Group, Our Lady of the Lake Medical Center and Baton Rouge General Medical Center. The Baton Rouge Metropolitan Airport connects the area with four airline hubs serving the southern United States.

Brookings Institution lists Baton Rouge as one of the top 20 cities in North America for economic strength. *Portfolio* magazine rates it as one of the Top 10 Places for Young Adults.



OXFORD, MISSISSIPPI

(475 miles from Columbia)

Population: 14,147

Median Household Income:
\$38,450

Median Home Value: \$156,800

Major Industries: education;
health services; hospitality; retail

The 19th-century boosters of Lafayette County, Miss., surmised that naming the county seat after the English university town of Oxford might garner them the prize in the race to land the state university. They were right. Oxford has been the cultural center of the state ever since the **University of Mississippi** was founded there in 1848. The influx of the university's 15,800 students swells the small college town's population to double its Census count; the metro area of Oxford-Lafayette County is about 47,000.

The genteel Southern town is a writer's paradise, hometown to the likes of William Faulkner and John Grisham. Oxford is included in *The Best 100 Small Towns in America*.

The largest employers are Ole Miss, FNC Inc. and Baptist Memorial Hospital – North Mississippi. The nearest airports are in Tupelo, Miss., and Memphis.

The National Center for Natural Products Research in Oxford is the only U.S. facility with a federal license to cultivate marijuana for scientific research and for distribution to patients allowed marijuana for medical purposes.

STARKVILLE, MISSISSIPPI

(575 miles from Columbia)

Population: 23,888

Median Household Income: \$25,184

Median Home Value:
\$118,900

Major Industries:
education; health and
social services; retail;
manufacturing

Starkville is the home base for **Mississippi State University**, whose 21,424 students make MSU the largest university in the state. The university dominates the city's economy as the largest employer; others include OCH Medical Center, Sitel Computer Call Center and Flexsteel.

Delta Air Lines services Golden Triangle Regional Airport with daily connector flights to Memphis and Atlanta.

Starkville was cited by *Southern Business and Development* as a Top 10 location in the South for emerging growth companies.



Jeong Im murder case to get new analysis

By Janese Silvey

Thursday, January 5, 2012

University of Missouri police hope to revive an unsolved murder investigation by turning the case over to a multistate law enforcement organization for review.

Information related to Jeong Im's 2005 death is expected to be sent to the Mid-States Organized Crime Information Center in Springfield for a fresh analysis, Chief Jack Watring said. MOCIC is one of six Regional Information Sharing Systems centers across the country that help local law enforcement agencies solve major crimes.

"We want to give it another set of eyes," Watring said.

Saturday marks the seventh anniversary of Im's slaying in an MU parking garage. The 72-year-old microbiologist was stabbed to death before his body was stuffed into the trunk of his 1995 Honda Accord, which was then set on fire.

Police were called to the scene about 12:30 p.m., an estimated two hours after the incident occurred. Over the years, the MU Police Department has enlisted help from outside agencies, including the Mid-Missouri Major Case Squad and a homicide expert, with no success.

Watring blamed investigative difficulties on the fire and other circumstances at the scene.

It also is likely police do not have enough forensics to connect DNA from the scene to a suspect, said Mike Himmel, a retired Columbia police detective who teaches a forensic science class at Columbia College. Himmel's students take on actual cold cases, and in 2006, they helped find remains of a missing Missouri woman that helped incriminate her killer.

It is probable that Im's killer is not in a national DNA database, even if sufficient evidence exists from the scene, he said.

"If he or she is not in the system, there's no way to connect them," Himmel said. "If your prints aren't on file because you've never been at that level in the criminal system or if your DNA has never been submitted," investigators "could have a very good profile but nothing to match it to."

DNA is collected from criminals charged with major felonies, so misdemeanor arrests or legal skirmishes would not necessarily put Im's killer or killers into that database.

Police have not disclosed details about forensic evidence collected.

Im's family moved to California after the incident, but Watring said the department keeps in touch with his wife, Tesuk, regularly.

One vocal advocate for keeping pressure on police to solve the case, former MU Professor Henry Liu, died in a car crash in 2009.

But Watring said his officers don't need outside pressure; the unsolved death is a cloud hanging over the department. "Our guys want to solve it so bad," he said.

Police are offering a \$25,000 reward for information leading to an arrest.

The department has a rough sketch of a person who might be connected to the case. The person of interest is a slender white male, between 6 feet and 6 feet 2 inches in height with brown wavy hair who was wearing a painter's or drywall mask in the area of the Maryland Avenue Garage that day.

Police found an Old Hickory kitchen knife with an 8-inch blade at the scene. Investigators also are looking for the owner or driver of a faded red 1980s model Ford F-150 pickup spotted near the crime scene.

"If anybody has any information — no matter how small or minor they think it is — if they were in the area that day and saw or heard anything, please call us," Watring said.

Those wanting to remain anonymous can call CrimeStoppers at 875-8477.

Reach Janese Silvey at 573-815-1705 or e-mail jsilvey@columbiatribune.com.



ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Nixon makes appointments to Mo. higher ed boards

Gov. Jay Nixon has made several appointments to higher education commissions.

Democrat Brian Fogle, of Springfield, was named to the Coordinating Board for Higher Education that is responsible for overseeing the state Department of Higher Education. And Melanie Rippetoe of Vinita Park was appointed to the Missouri Higher Education Loan Authority.

Nixon also named three people to university governing boards. Democrat Beverly Miller, of Lebanon, was appointed to board of governors for Missouri State University. Robert Dowis, a Democrat from Conception, was tapped for the governing board at Northwest Missouri State University. Christine Chadwick of St. Louis was named to the Harris-Stowe State University Board of Regents.

Students of Michael Bushur and Amy Johnson were named representatives to governing boards for Truman State University and the University of Missouri system.

MU researchers' plasma brush aims to ease pain at the dentist

By Rachel Coward

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COLUMBIA — MU engineers and researchers at a Columbia-based medical device company are a step closer to developing a "plasma brush" that could take some of the pain, noise and expense out of getting a filling.

Its developers say the plasma brush painlessly disinfects and cleans a cavity before filling a tooth in less than 30 seconds, according to a news release from the MU News Bureau. It uses a "cool flame" that strengthens the bond for a longer-lasting filling, which reduces the chance of losing a tooth as the result of a filling being repeatedly replaced.

The research team hopes the plasma brush will make getting a filling a more comfortable experience.

Although the plasma brush procedure is painless and relatively quiet, dentists may still need to use a drill to assist in the filling process, said Meng Chen, chief scientist at Nanova Inc., which is helping to develop the brush and owns with MU a co-patent for the invention.

Hao Li, associate professor of mechanical and aerospace engineering in the MU College of Engineering, said that 200 million fillings cost Americans an estimated \$50 billion a year, and he estimates that replacement fillings make up 75 percent of a dentist's work, according to the release.

The plasma brush developers hope their invention will reduce those costs. A tooth can only support two or three fillings before it must be pulled, Li said.

"Our studies indicate that fillings are 60 percent stronger with the plasma brush, which would increase the filling lifespan," Li said. "This would be a big benefit to the patient, as well as dentists and insurance companies."

Before the brush can be used in dentist offices, it will be sent to the University of Tennessee Health Science Center in Memphis for human clinical trials. The six-month animal studies

began in September, Chen said. Recruitment of about 100 adult patients is scheduled to begin in March for the human trials, and those are expected to be finished in April 2013.

"So far every thing is going well in Memphis," Chen said in an email. "The animal study is expected to support that the plasma brush will not generate a side effect on healthy gum tissue."

Yong Wang, a professor in the department of oral biology at the University of Kansas City School of Dentistry, said it could be a few years before the patients will see the device in dentist's offices.

"It may take time for the dentists to learn this technology, and I don't think it will happen very soon," Wang said. "The best idea may be to lend this brush to a dental school and ask for a student to try it, get a feeling for it and hands-on experience for future practice."

Researchers said they hoped the product would be available to dentists as early as the end of 2013.