WASHINGTON — Declaring the American dream under siege, President Barack Obama called Tuesday night for a flurry of help for a hurting middle class and higher taxes on millionaires, delivering a State of the Union address packed with re-election themes. Restoring a fair shot for all, Obama said, is "the defining issue of our time."

Obama outlined a vastly different vision for fixing the country than the one pressed by the Republicans challenging him in Congress and fighting to take his job in the November election. He pleaded for an active government that ensures economic fairness for everyone, just as his opponents demand that the government back off and let the free market rule.

**Obama offered steps to help students afford college, a plan for more struggling homeowners to refinance their homes and tax cuts for manufacturers. He threw in politically appealing references to accountability, including warning universities they will lose federal aid if they don't stop tuition from soaring.**

Standing in front of a divided Congress, with bleak hope this election year for much of his legislative agenda, Obama spoke with voters in mind.

"We can either settle for a country where a shrinking number of people do really well, while a growing number of Americans barely get by," Obama said. "Or we can restore an economy where everyone gets a fair shot, everyone does their fair share, and everyone plays by the same set of rules."
A rare wave of unity splashed over the House chamber at the start. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, survivor of an assassination attempt one year ago, received sustained applause from her peers and cheers of "Gabby, Gabby, Gabby." She blew a kiss to the podium. Obama embraced her.

Lawmakers leapt to their feet when Obama said near the start of his speech that terrorist leader Osama bin Laden, killed by a raid authorized by the president, will no longer threaten America.

At the core of Obama's address was the improving but deeply wounded economy — the matter still driving Americans' anxiety and the one likely to determine the next presidency.

"The state of our union is getting stronger," Obama said, calibrating his words as millions remain unemployed. Implicit in his declaration that the American dream is "within our reach" was the recognition that, after three years of an Obama presidency, the country is not there yet.

He spoke of restoring basic goals: owning a home, earning enough to raise a family, putting a little money away for retirement.

"We can do this," Obama said. "I know we can." He said Americans are convinced that "Washington is broken," but he also said it wasn't too late to cooperate on important matters.

Republicans were not impressed. They applauded infrequently, though they did cheer when the president quoted "Republican Abraham Lincoln" as saying: "That government should do for people only what they cannot do better by themselves — and no more."

Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels, offering the formal GOP response, called Obama's policies "pro-poverty" and his tactics divisive.

"No feature of the Obama presidency has been sadder than its constant efforts to divide us, to curry favor with some Americans by castigating others," Daniels said in excerpts released before the address.

In a signature swipe at the nation's growing income gap, Obama called for a new minimum tax rate of at least 30 percent on anyone making over $1 million. Many millionaires — including one of his chief rivals, Republican Mitt Romney — pay a rate less than that because they get most of their income from investments, which are taxed at a lower rate.
"Now you can call this class warfare all you want," Obama said, responding to a frequent criticism from the GOP presidential field. "But asking a billionaire to pay at least as much as his secretary in taxes? Most Americans would call that common sense."

Obama calls this the "Buffett rule," named for billionaire Warren Buffett, who has said it's unfair that his secretary pays a higher tax rate than he does. Emphasizing the point, Buffett's secretary, Debbie Bosanek, attended the address in first lady Michelle Obama's box.

Obama underlined every proposal with the idea that hard work and responsibility still count. He was targeting independent voters who helped seal his election in 2008 and the frustrated masses in a nation pessimistic about its course.

In a flag-waving defense of American power and influence abroad, Obama said the U.S. will safeguard its own security "against those who threaten our citizens, our friends and our interests." On Iran, he said that while all options are on the table to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon — an implied threat to use military force — "a peaceful resolution of this issue is still possible."

With Congress almost universally held in low regard, Obama went after an easy target in calling for reforms to keep legislators from engaging in insider trading and holding them to the same conflict-of-interest standards as those that apply to the executive branch.

With the foreclosure crisis an ongoing sore spot despite a number of administration housing initiatives over the past three years, Obama proposed a new program to allow homeowners with privately held mortgages to refinance at lower interest rates. Administration officials offered few details but estimated savings at $3,000 a year for average borrowers.

Obama proposed steps to crack down on fraud in the financial sector and mortgage industry, with a Financial Crimes Unit to monitor bankers and financial service professionals, and a separate special unit of federal prosecutors and state attorneys general to expand investigations into abusive lending that led to the housing crisis.

At a time of tight federal budgets and heavy national debt, Obama found a ready source of money to finance his ideas: He proposed to devote half of the money no longer being spent on the U.S. military in Iraq and Afghanistan to "do some nation-building right here at home," to help create more jobs and increase competitiveness. The other half, he said, would go to help pay down the national debt.
Obama also offered a defense of regulations that protect the American consumer — regulations often criticized by Republicans as job-killing obstacles.

"Millions of Americans who work hard and play by the rules every day deserve a government and a financial system that do the same," Obama said. "It's time to apply the same rules from top to bottom: No bailouts, no handouts and no copouts. An America built to last insists on responsibility from everybody."

Obama will follow up Tuesday night's address with a three-day tour of five states key to his re-election bid. On Wednesday he'll visit Iowa and Arizona to promote ideas to boost American manufacturing; on Thursday in Nevada and Colorado he'll discuss energy, and in Michigan on Friday he'll talk about college affordability, education and training.

Polling shows Americans are divided about Obama's overall job performance but unsatisfied with his handling of the economy.

The speech Tuesday night comes just one week before the Florida Republican primary that could help set the trajectory for the rest of the race.

Romney, caught up in a tight contest with a resurgent Newt Gingrich, commented in advance to Obama's speech.

"Tonight will mark another chapter in the misguided policies of the last three years — and the failed leadership of one man," Romney said from Florida.
WASHINGTON -- President Obama put higher education squarely in his rhetorical sights during the State of the Union address Tuesday night, calling for plans to reduce the interest rate on student loans, extend popular tax credits and shore up support for community colleges' job training programs.

The president conveyed a brief but forceful message to the nation's colleges and universities: "You're on notice."

"If you can't stop tuition from going up, the funding you get from taxpayers will go down," Obama said, drawing immediate applause. "Higher education can't be a luxury -- it's an economic imperative that every family in America should be able to afford." Although the speech did not offer any additional details about that warning, a document the White House published accompanying the speech said that the president would propose to "shift some federal aid away from colleges that don't keep net tuition down and provide good value."

The president's pugnacious speech, intended in part to fire up Democrats as Obama's re-election campaign gets under way, echoed some familiar themes in its list of higher education proposals. As he has in previous State of the Union speeches and more recent public appearances, Obama praised community colleges, called for spending more on federal student aid and preserving federal research money from cuts, and hit heavily on a recent focus: keeping college affordable.

Amid increasing concern about student debt -- calling on an oft-cited statistic. Obama said student loans have now outpaced credit-card debt -- the president urged Congress to forestall a planned increase on the interest rate on federal student loans, which will double to 6.8 percent in July if no action is taken. Obama also proposed doubling the number of federal work-study jobs in the next five years.

Keeping the interest rate on subsidized loans at the current 3.4 percent would cost about $5 billion per year, although estimates vary. Doubling the work-study program would cost about $1 billion more, said Mark Kantrowitz, publisher of FinAid.org. In an uncertain budget environment, when the Pell Grant -- backbone of the federal student aid programs -- seems to be constantly threatened with cuts, it's unclear where the money would come from.
“Given the fierce budget battles that have been waged so far in the past two years, there’s a high amount of doubt that that interest rate can be kept down,” said Justin Draeger, president of the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators, adding that he was pleased with the president’s focus on higher education issues and support for financial aid programs.

The president also called for making permanent the American Opportunity Tax Credit, which provides up to $2,500 for tuition expenses. But he did not mention the Pell Grant, which for the past two years has been the focus of the administration’s federal student aid efforts.

The proposals would benefit both low- and middle-income students: about two-thirds of subsidized loan recipients come from families with incomes less than $50,000 per year. But only about half of those who benefit from the tax credit are considered low-income, Kantrowitz said. Shoring up the Pell Grant, instead of using federal money to expand work-study, cut the interest rate or extend the tax credits, would do more for needy students, he added.

“These proposals seem to be aimed to some extent at the middle-income families.” Kantrowitz said. “That’s not unexpected in a presidential election year: middle-income families are more likely to vote.”

Community colleges, a major focus for the Obama administration in part because of their link to job training, were an early focus in the speech. But few ideas put forward in that section were new: the president called for partnerships between community colleges and private sector companies and streamlining job training programs to turn the the colleges into "community career centers."

And community colleges, with their low tuition rates, were seemingly exempt from the harsher portion of the president’s speech: telling colleges they were "on notice" to stop tuition increases. College affordability has emerged as a major theme for the administration in recent months, beginning with a speech from Education Secretary Arne Duncan at the Federal Student Aid conference in November. In the State of the Union address, Obama mentioned his December meeting with college presidents to discuss affordability and productivity. And administration officials, including Duncan and Vice President Joe Biden, have kept up a drumbeat on college costs, with Biden most recently causing a stir by blaming professors’ salaries.

Tuesday night, Obama acknowledged that the states also have a role to play: "It’s not enough for us to increase student aid,” he said. “We can’t just keep subsidizing skyrocketing tuition; we’ll run out of money. States also need to do their part, by making higher education a higher priority in their budgets. And colleges and universities have to do their part by working to keep costs down.”

How states would be held accountable was not clear. One possibility is permanent "maintenance of effort" requirements, which in the stimulus bill forced states to keep higher education funding at a certain threshold in order to be eligible for federal grants. While the threat to colleges was more direct, just what federal funds might be withheld remained an open question.
“What I’m struck by is how little we know about what the administration intends, even after the speech has concluded,” said Terry Hartle, senior vice president for government and public affairs at the American Council on Education.

More details may emerge Friday, when Obama is scheduled to speak at the University of Michigan, where his speech will focus on college affordability. And even when the administration’s proposals are clear, there is still Congress to consider. While keeping college costs low appeared to be a bipartisan applause line, cutting the interest rate seemed to draw approval largely from Democrats.

“The fact is, a lot of this is going to have to go through the meat grinder on Capitol Hill,” Hartle said.
Cuts put UM curators in tight spot

Board to discuss tuition next week.

By Janese Silvey

University of Missouri System curators face a conundrum next week when they meet to discuss tuition rates.

Historically, universities have increased tuition to offset cuts in state funding like the $50 million decrease UM is facing in fiscal year 2013. But if last year is any indication, raising tuition too high could prompt further cuts in state funds.

Gov. Jay Nixon has proposed a budget that decreases funding to higher education by 12.5 percent. Lawmakers have said they want to soften that cut, but it might not matter: The General Assembly last year lessened a cut to public universities and colleges only to have Nixon withhold the funding after the session was over. And the UM System got an additional withholding as punishment for raising tuition by more than the 5 percent Nixon recommended.

“Arguably, the governor had absolutely no legal authority to do that,” said Sen. Kurt Schaefer, R-Columbia, who is chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Still, Nixon’s action last year no doubt will be on the minds of curators when they discuss tuition in Kansas City next week.

“Obviously that’s part of the equation as we move forward with this,” Curator Wayne Goode said.

Asked whether Nixon is giving universities a recommendation for tuition increases, spokesman Scott Holste referred the Tribune to an Associated Press story last week that quoted Nixon warning universities not to boost tuition more than the consumer price index, roughly 3 percent.

Under state law, universities must seek a waiver from the Department of Higher Education if they want to increase tuition by more than the CPI. David Russell, higher education commissioner, sent letters to colleges this month outlining the process.

“I’ve consistently advised university presidents over time to keep the special circumstances families face these days in mind.” Russell said. “The double-digit increases in tuition we experienced in the early part of this decade are over.”
But Russell, a former UM administrator, said he realizes colleges have frozen salaries, cut positions and streamlined operations over the past three years in response to dwindling resources.

"Universities are running out of options," he said.

Goode, a former state senator, said he understands tough budget times.

"But it's a situation where something's got to give," he said. "Students certainly aren't helped by needing to pay higher tuition. But on the other hand, they're not helped either by cutbacks in services, larger class sizes," colleges "not offering as many sections and those sorts of things."

Schaefer said college boards should set tuition based on what it takes to operate their institutions. But he also suggested asking the governor whether he plans to punish them again if they raise tuition too high.

"I think the governor needs to clarify what his intentions are so they can make an informed decision," he said. "It's not fair for the governor to make them just guess."

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JEFFERSON CITY — The budget cuts to higher education announced at Gov. Jay Nixon's State of the State address last Tuesday are deeper than the numbers presented by the governor's budget director and reported by the media.

Although the 12.5 percent cut presented by the governor's budget director and used in many news reports are not completely inaccurate, the actual cuts in appropriations to public universities are 15.1 percent when compared to what the Missouri General Assembly approved last year. The cuts to Missouri's public universities are the deepest in at least two decades.

The more accurate figure caught the Senate Appropriations Chair, Sen. Kurt Schaefer, R-Columbia, by surprise. He agreed the 15.1 percent cut was the more accurate number. Schaefer called the governor's 12.5 percent cut "not true."

The two sets of numbers result from a difference in perspective and a spending withhold Nixon placed on the colleges last year.

The Missouri Constitution allows the governor to withhold money from a budget if state revenues fall below expected levels. Nixon used this power in July to withhold $150 million from the 2012 budget, $10 million of which came from the universities.

If the withhold on the current university budgets are taken into account, then the governor's 12.5 percent figure is correct; however, if the proposed cut is compared with the legislature's 2012 appropriation, then the 15.1 percent cut is accurate.

In theory, the governor could decide at any point this fiscal year to withhold more money from the universities or return funds to them.
Schaefer said the legislature does not "appropriate off a moving target."

The constant flux of withholds makes basing budget figures difficult for lawmakers. In fact, three percent of state agency appropriations are automatically withheld every quarter during a fiscal year according to statute, and can only be released with the governor's approval.

The governor's budget is similar to the one concerning elementary education funding. During his State of the State address, Nixon touted his education budget as a "record amount" in funding for school districts.

House Budget Chairman Ryan Silvey, R-Kansas City, called this statement "misleading" and pointed out that it was the General Assembly last year who gave a record amount to school districts before withholds from Nixon brought the figure down.

The amount of money the governor proposed for the school foundation program is actually $5 million lower than what the General Assembly approved last year. This is because of a withhold of local school district transportation funding for the current fiscal year that the governor took into account when presenting his 2013 plan.

Nixon announced the withholds from the 2012 budget as a means to reserve payments for disaster relief from last spring's floods and tornadoes.

At the time of withholds, the state's fiscal year had not yet begun. This episode is the subject of a pending lawsuit in the Cole County Circuit Court filed by Republican Auditor Tom Schweich, who contends Nixon defied the state constitution when he withheld money prior to the start of the fiscal year.

Nixon was able to allocate money for the disaster relief and withhold from other parts of the budget because of an accounting practice that allows specific programs to spend all the money they can get. The General Assembly placed a "1E" character on the 2012 budget for disaster relief last year, allowing the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) to spend an unspecified amount of money if it could. Nixon's $150 million withhold gave SEMA the funds to pay for disaster relief.

The state faces a budget shortfall of $500 million caused by the use of one-time federal stimulus funds in previous years and a reduction in the federal government's matching rate of Medicaid costs.
Forsee, Kelly honored for service to MU

By Rudi Keller

JEFFERSON CITY — As he accepted the Mizzou Alumni Association’s annual public service award, state Rep. Chris Kelly challenged faculty and alumni to do more than complain about politicians.

At the Governor’s Mansion yesterday, Kelly and former University of Missouri System President Gary Forsee were awarded the Geyer Award. The award is named for Rep. Henry Geyer, who in 1839 sponsored the bill establishing the university, and is given each year by the alumni association’s Legislative Network. Kelly last night became the only person to win the award twice in its 20-year history.

And Kelly, who in a legislative career that includes portions of four decades has never passed up an opportunity to direct money to UM, wrapped his appeal on the school’s behalf in praise of Forsee.

“He taught the administration at the University of Missouri — and I hope the alumni association — a very important lesson, and that is do not be complacent, do not be bowed, do not be afraid, do not be intimidated by the political class,” Kelly said. “Get in there and fight for what you know is right. That is Gary Forsee’s legacy, and it is a strong and tremendous one.”

What the university needs now, Kelly said, is the revenue from a cigarette tax increase. “It is fine to talk about, and true to talk about, the failure of the political class with regard to the University of Missouri,” Kelly said. “The political community in Missouri has failed the university and failed the state thereby.”

Gov. Jay Nixon did not attend the reception. In fiscal year 2010, Nixon’s first full year in office, the state provided a record $461.4 million to the university. That budget was supported by federal aid to states, and lawmakers sought to give the university $14.3 million more than Nixon allowed to be spent.

If Nixon’s budget recommendation of $348.3 million for the coming fiscal year is adopted by lawmakers, the university’s appropriation will have been cut by 26.8 percent in three years.

In his speech, Kelly asked alumni to give to the initiative being pushed by Curator Warren Erdman to increase cigarette taxes by 73 cents a pack. The tax would raise $283 million to $423 million, with funds split among education and tobacco-prevention programs.
Instead of giving to politicians this year, Kelly said, “write a check to Erdman because he is doing that cigarette tax, and that is real, real important for this institution.”

The initiative petition is being pursued because Republican legislative leaders have said they will refuse to consider any tax rate increases this year, and Nixon has repeatedly made his intentions clear that he will not ask for tax hikes.

Forsee shied away from a direct call for support for the tax increase. Instead, his talk after receiving the award focused on his memories and achievements during his tenure as president.

Forsee resigned in January 2011 to help his wife, Sherry, battle cancer. She was with him last night, and he said, “You can see Sherry is doing great.”

During his three years on the job, Forsee said, he saw his role as being an advocate for the school and public higher education.

“It was an opportunity to talk about accountability for outcomes, which we — because of or unique mission of teaching, of research, service, and economic development — we are unique in carrying that out,” he said.

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MU Veterans Center pair wins high honor

A University of Missouri student and administrator were honored with one of the country’s top awards yesterday for their efforts to improve college life for veterans returning from service.

Dan Sewell, who is pursuing a master’s degree in business administration, and MU Veterans Center Director Carol Fleisher each received an Outstanding Public Service Award from the Department of Defense. Top defense administrators joined campus leaders to celebrate the awards at Memorial Union.

The two helped establish the MU Veterans Center, which has boosted MU’s reputation as a military-friendly campus. Since it opened in late 2008, the veteran population on campus has nearly doubled, growing from 250 to nearly 500. Fleisher expects the trend to continue.

“That’s going to go way up by the end of this year because Iraq has wound down and Afghanistan is winding down,” she said. “There are going to be a lot of military personnel freed up to come back to school.”

Most universities have someone in a financial aid office who can navigate veterans’ benefits, Fleisher said.

“For our office, that’s not the major goal. The major goal is to take care of veterans, take care of their needs,” she said. MU “is on the map for that alone.”

The Veterans Center helps veterans connect with others in their fields of study, advises them on coursework and refers them to counseling and other services.

The center also aims to boost an understanding of veterans issues on campus. Since it opened, MU has begun accepting some military transfer credits, providing tutoring to veterans free of charge and offering a course that helps veterans transition to campus life.

“It’s about providing” veterans “the opportunity to be successful,” Sewell said during yesterday’s ceremony. “That’s all they want.”

Fleisher praised Chancellor Brady Deaton and other administrators for leading efforts to make MU friendlier for returning service members.

“Other schools don’t have a commitment from the top,” she said. “Veterans can want it. Faculty can want it. But it has to come from the top.”
MU might send Fleisher to military bases to recruit more veterans, said Ann Korschgen, vice chancellor of enrollment management. For now, though, students are choosing MU based on reputation, she said.

During the ceremony, Korschgen praised Fleisher for using her experiences as a member of a military family to help others. Fleisher, she said, “is an effective and sometimes ferocious advocate for veterans.”

Fleisher credited Sewell for setting an example for other returning veterans. The husband and father earned a bachelor’s degree while serving as president of the Mizzou Student Veterans Association.

“Not only did Dan make it,” Fleisher said. “He made sure others could do it, too.”

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Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon and the Senate's top leader are sparring over two nominations to the University of Missouri Board of Curators, the Columbia Daily Tribune reports.

Craig Van Matre of Columbia and Pam Henrickson of Jefferson City had been serving on the board since being appointed last fall, but have been removed from the roster of curators on the University of Missouri website.

Sources said Nixon sent letters to the Senate withdrawing the nominations but the messages were declined.

A Nixon spokesman now says the confirmation process will move forward.

Both Van Matre and Hendrickson must be confirmed by Feb. 3 or lose their ability to serve as curators.
UM curator nominations in limbo

By Rudi Keller and Janese Silvey

JEFFERSON CITY — A battle is brewing between Gov. Jay Nixon and the Senate's top leader over two nominations to the University of Missouri Board of Curators.

The names of Craig Van Matre of Columbia and Pam Henrickson of Jefferson City, who had been serving on the board since they were appointed last fall, were removed today from the roster of curators on the UM website.

Senate President Pro Tem Rob Mayer, R-Dexter, declined to comment early Tuesday afternoon, except to say he intends to hold a hearing on Henrickson, a Republican, as scheduled at 8:30 a.m. Wednesday. And, he said, he intends to hold a vote on both nominations.

Sources said Nixon sent letters to the Senate withdrawing the nominations but Mayer declined to accept the messages. The UM System's curators' secretary was notified that the names were withdrawn Monday. As of 5 p.m. Tuesday, the office had not been told otherwise by Nixon's office.

"After discussions with Senate leadership regarding sequencing, the confirmation process will be moving forward," Sam Murphey, a spokesman for Nixon, said Tuesday afternoon.

Because both were nominated between legislative sessions, Van Matre and Henrickson must be confirmed by Feb. 3 or lose their ability to serve as curators.

Van Matre's nomination has been one of the most troubled appointments of Nixon's administration. He was originally nominated last January, but his name was withdrawn when the legislative session ended without a hearing or vote on his appointment.

Mayer blocked Van Matre last year and at the time said he was holding the appointment to pressure Nixon to appoint someone Mayer wanted to be on a state board. After lawmakers adjourned, Nixon gave Van Matre an interim appointment, allowing him to act as a curator pending confirmation when lawmakers returned.

During the special session in September, Nixon asked lawmakers to confirm his nominees, but Mayer refused to take them up. Again Nixon withdrew the nomination of Van Matre, waiting for lawmakers to adjourn the special session before again giving him an interim appointment.
Van Matre's latest nomination ran into difficulty last week when he was asked about his views of Republican legislative leadership. In 2007, Van Matre wrote an opinion piece for the Tribune accusing the GOP of wanting to turn Missouri into an Iran-style theocracy.

It's unclear why Henrickson's name was pulled before her nomination was slated to go to the Senate's Gubernatorial Appointments Committee on Wednesday morning.

Van Matre said Tuesday that he was not sure whether Nixon planned to renominate him after asking for the withdrawal. "I don't understand any of this," he said, adding that he feels like a political pawn.

Politics aside, it will be tough to operate the Board of Curators without three of its nine members, Chairman David Bradley said. Judy Haggard resigned from the board this month, citing personal reasons. Her term wasn't set to expire until 2013.

The board splits into committees that tackle finances, audits, academic affairs and other issues in-depth before bringing recommendations to the full board. Those committees typically meet on Thursdays with the full board reconvening Friday during regular curators' meetings.

"We need more people," Bradley said. "We've got a lot of work to do at the committee level. ... This is going to make things more difficult."
Curators' confirmations in doubt as vote on tuition hike approaches

By Celia Ampel
January 24, 2012 | 8:59 p.m. CST

COLUMBIA — With a vote on tuition and fees looming, the futures of two University of Missouri System curators are in doubt this week — again.

Curators Craig Van Matre and Pamela Henrickson were appointed to the UM System Board of Curators last year by Gov. Jay Nixon, but neither appointment was approved by the Senate during its 2011 legislative sessions.

Henrickson, a Jefferson City attorney, is still scheduled for a hearing Wednesday morning with the Gubernatorial Appointments Committee, said Farrah Fite, majority caucus communications director.

Last week, Van Matre had his hearing with the committee, which will hold votes as early as Wednesday to decide whether to advance both confirmations to the full Senate.

If Nixon withdraws the names, the board will have only six active curators on the nine-member governing body when it meets next week at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. Curators are slated to vote then on tuition and fee increases at all four UM System campuses.

Curator Judith Haggard of Kennett resigned on Jan. 17, saying she could not finish out the final year of her six-year term.

Van Matre, a Columbia attorney, said he received a call Monday from Boards and Commissions Director Deborah Price, who told him the governor's office was planning to withdraw his appointment. Price called him again Tuesday afternoon to tell him the withdrawal might not occur.

Senate President Pro Tem Rob Mayer has not requested that Van Matre's name be withdrawn, Fite said. Mayer is also the chairman of the Gubernatorial Appointments Committee.
Only Senate approval is required for curator confirmations.

Van Matre’s appointment has been withdrawn twice already after failing to be approved during legislative sessions last year. Henrickson’s appointment was withdrawn once last fall. The debate over Van Matre’s Senate confirmation surrounds an August 2007 editorial he wrote for the Columbia Daily Tribune.

The editorial criticizes state Republicans’ reaction to the Missouri Nonpartisan Court Plan. Van Matre wrote that it appeared some judges were not approved by then-Gov. Matt Blunt because of their position on whether abortion should be legal.

State Sen. Kevin Engler said he takes issue with the editorial because it shows strong political views, particularly when Van Matre refers to state Republicans as Gov. Blunt’s "minions."

"If somebody has a lot of political views one way or the other, his views will affect how he acts on the Board of Curators," Engler said.

Engler said that he will filibuster Van Matre’s appointment if it comes before the full Senate and that other Senate Republicans have told him they will do the same.

"I would prefer not to filibuster," Engler said, adding that he would rather Van Matre’s name be withdrawn. "We are not out to embarrass him."

Van Matre said political beliefs have not historically been a consideration for appointments to the Board of Curators.

"The Board of Curators is supposed to be nonpolitical," he said. "In the year and a half I’ve been on the board, politics has never been a consideration. The only consideration has been what’s good for the university. ... And so using political beliefs as a criterion for how curators are selected is going to change things if it continues."

Van Matre said that last week, at least one senator told him that he would oppose Van Matre’s confirmation because of the views expressed in the Tribune editorial.

"The reason they gave is my position on those issues: separation of church and state, abortion and the Missouri Court Plan," Van Matre said.

He said he was uncomfortable with the idea of having no political views.
"There are 34 senators," he said. "It's impossible to agree with all of them. They can't even agree with themselves. The only solution is to believe in nothing, and someone who believes in nothing isn't worth much."

Van Matre has been appointed to the Board of Curators three times: in January, June and October 2011. Each of the first two times, the governor's office withdrew his appointment before it faced Senate confirmation. Even when he was not allowed to vote because his appointment had been withdrawn, he still attended curators' meetings.

Henrickson has joined meetings since her appointment in August 2011. She did not return a call to her office on Tuesday.

Van Matre said he doesn't have "any trouble" with being withdrawn.

"If it's going to be a waste of time, it doesn't make sense to force the issue," he said.

Van Matre said he isn't sure whether he will eventually pull himself out of the process to end the cycle of withdrawals and re-appointments.

"I'm going to have a conversation with the governor before I make a decision like that," he said.
London

Coogee coo-blimey: Babies are born 'with knowledge of intuitive physics'

By Ted Thornhill

Last updated at 6:24 PM on 24th January 2012

While it may appear that infants are helpless creatures that only blink, eat, cry and sleep, infant brains actually come equipped with knowledge of 'intuitive physics', according to a study.

'We study infant knowledge of the world by measuring a child’s gaze when presented with different scenarios,' said Kristy vanMarle, an assistant professor in the Department of Psychological Sciences at the University of Missouri.

'We believe that infants are born with expectations about the objects around them, even though that knowledge is a skill that’s never been taught. As the child develops, this knowledge is refined and eventually leads to the abilities we use as adults.'

In a review of related scientific literature from the past 30 years, vanMarle and Susan Hespos of Northwestern University found that the evidence for intuitive physics occurs in infants as young as two months – the earliest age at which testing can occur.

At that age, infants show an understanding that unsupported objects will fall and that hidden objects do not cease to exist.

Scientific testing also has shown that by five months, infants have an expectation that non-cohesive substances like sand or water are not solid.

In a previous publication, vanMarle found that children as young as 10 months consistently choose larger amounts when presented with two different amounts of food substance.

'We believe that infants are born with the ability to form expectations and they use these expectations basically to predict the future,' vanMarle said. 'Intuitive physics include skills that adults use all the time.'

'For example, when a glass of milk falls off the table, a person might try to catch the cup, but they are not likely to try to catch the milk that spills out. The person doesn’t have to consciously think about what to do because the brain processes the information and the person simply reacts.'
'The majority of an adult's everyday interactions with the world are automatic, and we believe infants have the same ability to form expectations, predicting the behaviour of objects and substances with which they interact.'

While the intuitive physics knowledge is believed to be present at birth, vanMarle believes parents can assist skill development through normal interaction, such as playing and talking with the child and encouraging him/her to interact with objects.
New Presidents or Provosts
January 25, 2012 - 3:00am

By Doug Lederman

- Debra Daniels, president of San Bernardino Valley College, in California, has been chosen as president of Joliet Junior College, in Illinois.
- William E. Durgin, provost and vice president for academic affairs at California Polytechnic State University at San Luis Obispo, has been named provost at the State University of New York Institute of Technology.
- Mark Erickson, president of Wittenberg University, in Ohio, has been selected as president of Northampton Community College, in Pennsylvania.
- Dan King, vice president for academic affairs at Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology, has been promoted to provost there.
- Rodney Rogers, interim senior vice president for academic affairs at Bowling Green State University, in Ohio, has been named to the job on a permanent basis.
- Timothy M. Wolfe, North American president of Novell, has been selected as president of the University of Missouri System.
Communication about transit remains open

*The university, the city of Columbia and affected apartment complexes are considering their options.*

By Elise Moser Published Jan. 24, 2012

MU has hired a consultant to assess the possibility of MU owning its own transit system as complications persist with Columbia Transit. The consultant from a firm specializing in transit issues will interview students and staff early this semester to determine what MU’s transit needs are.

Columbia announced a proposal to make severe budget cuts that would end services to many apartment complexes along Old Highway 63 unless MU agrees to an $80 per semester student fee.

No agreement has been reached between MU and the city of Columbia, but Missouri Students Association President Xavier Billingsley said MU is not closing any doors.

“Right now, any option is up,” Billingsley said. “With a situation like this, anything is possible.”

MSA Senate Speaker Jacob Sloan said the consultant is going to figure out what students want, what MU can provide and what the costs will be.

Although MU has hired a consultant, Billingsley plans to keep the lines of communication open between the city and MU.

“I hope that we can work more with the mayor and we can work collaboratively,” he said.

Since taking over for Eric Woods as MSA president this semester, Billingsley has worked to become familiar with the transit issue.

“I’ve already had a couple meetings with (Vice Chancellor for Administrative Services) Jackie Jones and (Director of Parking and Transportation Services) Jim Joy to prepare myself for transit,” he said. “We’re working as a team and the communication is pretty open.”

Billingsley said he is optimistic about the idea of MU owning its own transit system.

“I campaigned on it,” he said. “I think it’s something that’s worth looking into. We own our own facilities. We own our own Campus Dining Services. It’s at least worth looking into owning our own transit services.”
Sloan is more cautious about the idea.

"It's something tough to achieve," he said.

Sloan also said he was hesitant of the idea because the service might not be accessible to all students.

"The problem you run into and the reason why I'm very hesitant is how do you target students who have to walk three blocks to get to a bus stop?" he said.

Sloan currently lives at The Reserve at Columbia, an apartment complex off of Old Highway 63.

"It's my service (from Columbia Transit) that is going to be cut and terminated in May 2012," he said.

Some of the affected complexes are promising to continue shuttle service regardless of what Columbia Transit decides to do.

"As we decide which direction we want to go, I want to assure all of you that we will have daytime shuttle service in the fall of 2012," Matthew Colgin, community manager at The Reserve, said in a Jan. 17 email to residents. "There is no question of that."

The Reserve is considering proposals from the City of Columbia as well as private shuttle companies.

"The city's given a proposal and other companies have also given proposals, so it's just a matter of choosing the right one," Colgin said. "We see a need for (shuttle service.) We're going to do it either way, whatever the city decides."
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Columbia representative Still files bill to raise cigarette tax

NO MU Mention

By Karen Miller
January 24, 2012 | 7:49 p.m. CST

JEFFERSON CITY — An increase in Missouri’s tobacco tax proposed by state Rep. Mary Still would generate $400 million in new revenue for education if approved by state voters.

Missouri has the lowest cigarette tax in the nation at 17 cents per pack. Mary Still, D-Columbia, wants to increase that tax to 89 cents. The new tax, proposed in House Bill 1478, would remain well below the national average of $1.46. The tax also would apply to cigars, snuff and chewing tobacco.

"I value funding education over having the lowest cigarette tax in the country," Still said Tuesday.

Last week, Gov. Jay Nixon released a proposed budget for fiscal 2013 that would cut higher education funding by $89 million.

"The way to avoid cuts to higher education is to have more revenue coming in," Still said.

Still has several co-sponsors on the bill, including Rep. Chris Kelly, D-Columbia, but she has no Republican co-sponsors. She also is working with the Missouri Cancer Society and the Missouri Budget Project and she has consulted the website for the Missouri Foundation for Health for information to support the rationale behind her bill.

The amount of revenue added by the tax would be above limits established by the Missouri Constitution’s Hancock Amendment, which means it would require voter approval to become law.

Still said because the higher tobacco tax would be subject to a public vote, that her bill has a fighting chance. But it has a long road ahead. The bill was introduced on Tuesday and will
now be referred to a House committee, possibly the Ways and Means Committee, for a hearing. If it clears the committee, it would go the House for floor debate and then to the Senate.

If approved, it would appear on the November general election ballot unless a special election is called before then.

Sen. John Lamping, R-St. Louis County, also has filed Senate Bill 638, which would increase Missouri's tax on cigarettes to 43 cents. His proposal, however, would send the money to the state's general revenue fund. Lamping's bill also would exempt the first $2,000 of Missouri adjusted gross income from state income tax and adjust tax rates on other levels of income.

Still and Lamping aren't the only ones calling for higher tobacco taxes. Several initiative petitions have been approved by Missouri Secretary of State Robin Carnahan, and supporters are collecting signatures to have them placed on the ballot.

Missouri ranks fourth in the nation for percentage of adults who smoke and fifth in the number of new lung cancer cases, Still said in a news release.

Missouri received a failing grade on the American Lung Association's smoking report card for the fourth year in a row. Missouri received an F in all four categories: program spending, smoke-free air, cigarette tax and cessation.

Still has been pushing a higher tobacco tax for a couple of years.

"To me, a tobacco tax is a no-brainer," she said.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Mizzou College Democrats react to State of the Union address

By Dan Burley
January 24, 2012 | 11:50 p.m. CST

COLUMBIA — President Barack Obama took the podium in the House of Representatives chamber on Tuesday night to deliver his last State of the Union address before his re-election attempt in 2012.

Almost 1,000 miles away, members of the Mizzou College Democrats nestled into their chairs at Boone Tavern, anticipating an inspiring speech to jump-start Obama's 2012 campaign.

"I'm very optimistic this year," Daniel Stribling, the club's outreach director, said. "Democrats have proven they're willing to work together. Republicans must be willing, too."

But the optimism was tempered with uncertainty at the watch party. Some of the viewers said they are worried about their future prospects in the stymied job market.

Alanna Bauer, a former Mizzou College Democrats member who graduated in May, had trouble finding a job after testing the market. She winced at the mention of student loans.

"I just reached the six-month margin when I have to pay loans," she said. "I definitely feel a burden. I wish I could go back to school to avoid it."

Stribling admitted the group members felt apprehensive about their prospects after graduation.

"Everyone in this room is worried about their future outlook," Stribling said. "But opportunities are out there if we do the right things."

The viewers applauded as Obama carved out the tenets of his plan to restore an America where "everyone plays by the same set of rules."
Obama’s remarks on higher education resonated with the college-aged crowd. His promise to double the number of collegiate work-study jobs in the next five years was received with great fanfare.

“We need to reinvest in education,” club president Zach Henry said. “The inequality of opportunity has increased too much in recent decades.”

Craig Arnzen, president of the Mizzou College Republicans, wasn’t convinced.

“It’s a great promise,” Arnzen said. "But like every other put-it-on-my-desk promise, he knows he’ll never see the legislation to sign it.”

Arnzen said he heard plenty of rhetoric but little reality in Obama’s words.

“It was a campaign speech packed with fluff — lots of message, no substance,” Arnzen said.

The Mizzou College Democrats left the watch party ready to move forward.

“I’m confident in the Obama administration,” Henry said. “Things are improving. There’s just a long way to go.”
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Police seek tip regarding Missourian theft

By Xiaoran Wang
January 24, 2012 | 7:02 p.m. CST

COLUMBIA — The MU Police Department is asking for the community's help in identifying an individual who may have information about an investigation regarding a theft from Lee Hills Hall.

A release from the police department does not provide additional details on this larceny case because it is an ongoing investigation.

MU police is offering a reward of up to $1,500 for helpful information, according to the release.

The theft took place during the 2011 Halloween weekend. Six iPads and one laptop were stolen from Lee Hills Hall, where the Columbia Missourian is located, Dan Potter, general manager of the Missourian said.

There are other faculty and staff members working at Lee Hills Hall who are not part of the Missourian whose property was stolen. Bruce Moore, the building coordinator for Lee Hills Hall, said this was the first time he knew of anybody going through the building and taking things. The Columbia Missourian has been in a process of improving its security system, said Executive Editor for Innovation Tom Warhover.

"The Missourian has installed video cameras at door entrances," Warhover said. "There are a number of security changes under way." Warhover said Lee Hills Hall will have a swipe-card system for after-hours, which requires an authorized student ID to gain entrance. The newspaper is also working on improving lighting outside and installing punch number access for several doors with codes that would change every semester.

All these changes were under way before the theft occurred.

If you have any information regarding this case, please call Detective Michael Laughlin at 884-2605, or Crime Stoppers at 875-8477. You can also share tips at 875tips.com.
MU freshman dies during chase in Illinois

By Brennan David

A University of Missouri freshman was fatally injured early Sunday when the truck she was riding in crashed while fleeing officers during a chase in Beardstown, Ill.

Brianna M. Baker, 19, was a passenger in a truck involved in a multijurisdictional chase that ended when the truck struck a utility pole, according to a Beardstown news release. An 18-year-old female was injured and taken to an area hospital. Three vehicle occupants were uninjured.

Baker, a native of LaPrairie, Ill., and a 2011 graduate of Camp Point Central High School, was studying English at MU. She was a member of her high school band and on the volleyball team. A 10 a.m. service is scheduled for Thursday at Hunter Funeral Home in Golden, Ill.

Around 2:50 a.m. Sunday, a Brown County, Ill., sheriff’s deputy responded to a complaint of property damage at a rural residence, according to a Brown County Sheriff’s Department news release. While the deputy was speaking to the complainant, a 2003 Chevrolet truck passed by and the complainant identified it as the suspect vehicle.

The deputy gave chase, and speeds exceeded 100 miles per hour as the vehicle left Brown County and entered Cass County. The chase ended in Beardstown when the truck struck a utility pole while taking a curve. The Cass County prosecuting attorney declined comment.

Beardstown police cited the vehicle’s driver, 19-year-old Jacob Hendricks of Mount Sterling, Ill., on suspicion of disobeying a traffic control signal, aggravated reckless driving, aggravated driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs, and aggravated driving under the influence of drugs. The Brown County Sheriff’s Department arrested Hendricks on suspicion of aggravated fleeing a police officer, reckless driving, driving under the influence, speeding, disobeying a traffic control device and failure to wear a seat belt.

Hendricks also likely will face charges stemming from the chase with Cass County deputies. All three investigations are ongoing.

Reach Brennan David at 573-815-1718 or e-mail bpdavid@columbiatribune.com.
Dunklin County, MO

Area students learn about nutrition through MU program

DEANNA CORONADO, Daily Dunklin Democrat

* Lavonda Swindle, standing, gives instruction during a Family Nutrition Education Program at South Elementary. (Staff photos by Deanna Coronado)

Fourth and fifth grade students at school districts in Dunklin County are currently participating in a nutritional education program designed to teach them about healthy foods and the benefits associated with exercise and regular physical activity.

The University of Missouri Extension offers school districts the opportunity to annually participate in its Family Nutrition Education Programs (FNEP), a program that provides vital information regarding nutrition and fitness via paraprofessional nutrition educators who are presently working hands-on with children who attend school in districts such as Kennett, Senath-Hornersville, Southland and Holcomb Public Schools.
The nutrition educator working with area students is a woman by the name of Lavonda Swindle. Swindle works with students in grades three through five at those districts, once per month, typically in the second and third weeks of the month on Tuesday and Thursday's.

Students at South Elementary learn the benefits of exercise through the nutrition program.

Recently, the Daily Dunklin Democrat caught up with Swindle, who was busy interacting with a group of fourth and fifth grade students at South Elementary. The kids who were in Mrs. Williams' room, worked along Swindle who was teaching them about vegetable food groupings and the nutrients found in those types of food items. During the lesson, Swindle encouraged students to participate in classroom discussion regarding vegetables and the health benefits associated with consuming them regularly during mealtimes.

"Specifically, we are working with each grade level on various subjects that all fall under the category of nutrition and physical activity," Swindle explained. "For example, in the third grade we are studying the six major nutrients, and fourth grade students are learning about food labels. My fifth grade kids are taking part in a program we call 'Jump Into Action' which places a strong emphasis on physical activity."

The third grade students' curriculum, according to the University of Missouri Extension website, consists primarily of lessons that focus on identifying essential macro and micro nutrients, how the digestive system operates and how to make more mindful healthy food choices, even at a young age when advertising techniques are plentiful in the media suggesting that kids take in junk food or less healthy meal options.

Fourth grade students at participating school districts in the area are learning to identify the parts of the food pyramid and how to utilize food labels in making decisions on what to eat. Kids taking part in this level of study are also learning through Swindle's efforts how to analyze social influences and factors like family and friends, as well as the media, and how each of these
influence eating habits. Students are learning about body image and are also being encouraged to look at physical activity as a part of every day, average, healthy living habits.

Fifth graders are doing the same but also incorporating more of the Extension's "Jump Into Action" program which goals to change overall food behaviors and increase physical activity among upper-elementary and pre-teen students. Students in the lower-level grades, including both fourth and third grades, equally participate in physical activity exercises and games, however, the fifth grade program simply puts more of a focus on this subject. According to the Extension, "Jump Into Action" helps kids learn how fast they are growing at this moment in their aging process. The program also explores alternative, healthy food choices that can help them live healthier lifestyles.

Swindle said the fifth graders she works with in Dunklin County are talking about subjects like drinking more milk and natural juice products versus sodas or other artificially sweetened beverages. They are also learning about fiber and its health benefits, and how to incorporate fruit into your daily food intake on a regular basis. In regard to the physical aspects of the program, Swindle explained that students are being provided resources and information that allows them to make the connection between physical activity and ideal weight. While participating in the fun, sweat inducing and heart-pumping activities associated with this program, kids are using pedometers to monitor how active they are. It is recommended through the lesson plan that the students set a goal of committing to 60 minutes of some form of physical activity every day versus staying inactive, indoors, sitting behind a television or glued to a video game console or home computer device.

"We just basically encourage them to get up, and get moving, while reminding them what the rewards are of living a more healthy, active lifestyle," Swindle said.

During the Daily Dunklin Democrat's recent visit in the nutrition education classroom, we had the opportunity to see first-hand how the kids incorporate a large portion of their class period to some form of physical activity. At the end of the workbook lesson, Swindle asked the students to put away their things and slide their desks to the side of the room, so that they would have more room available to "move around." And "move" they certainly did. Swindle fired up the speakers on a CD-player sitting on her desk which played two interactive songs in a row. She and a classroom aide stood at the front of the room and actively engaged the students in a dancing activity that got them moving around. They stretched their muscles, increased their heart rates, and began to perspire a little as they laughed and enjoyed the activity at hand-- "all signs of a good workout," according to their mentor. Just as the last song faded out, the bell rang, and the group was off to another class, a few of them thanking Swindle on their way out the door "for the good time."
"That's what it's all about," Swindle said. "We're able to teach them something beneficial that they will hopefully carry with them for a lifetime, and have fun while doing it. The students seem to really enjoy the program and I certainly enjoy working with them. I am so glad our schools support the idea and have continued to participate. It's a win-win for everyone."

For more information regarding the Family Nutrition Education Program offered through the University of Missouri Extension log on to its official website at http://extension.missouri.edu/fnep/index.htm
University Dean Questions the Value of College Education

New Kindle book looks at the costs and declining benefits of American higher education

Jan. 25, 2012, 8:35 a.m. EST

LOS ANGELES, Jan. 25, 2012 /PRNewswire via COMTEX/ -- Given the current economic climate, obtaining a college degree -- or beyond, some would argue -- is a requirement for finding quality work. But the value of that education, in terms of both dollars and intellectual importance, has never been more in question, argues a former university dean in a new book released this month.

As tuition rises and competition for admission into elite schools becomes more intense, sobering data tells us that approximately half the nation's four-year college students fail to complete the requirements for a baccalaureate degree but are nonetheless burdened by massive student-loan debt. Colleges and universities, meanwhile, struggle with reduced state funding, the nuances of "shaping" an incoming class, and programs that boost their rankings rather than their academic strength.

"The desire to open every university door to every potential student has led to massive loan programs. Standards have been reduced in order to provide 'access' and 'opportunity.'" says former university dean Richard B. Schwartz. He questions of the true worth of today's higher education in his new book Is a College Education Still Worth the Price?

Richard Schwartz has a wealth of experience in higher education. Currently a professor of English at the University of Missouri, he has served as dean, associate dean, and interim provost at the University of Wisconsin, Georgetown, and Missouri, and has taught at all three campuses. With an insider's knowledge, he argues that the entrenched flaws in educational policy require an honest and forthright look before we can begin the process of changing them.

Available for $2.99 in a list of short-form Amazon Kindle Books, Barnes and Noble Nook Books, and Apple iPad books published by boutique digital publisher Now and Then Reader. Is a College Education Still Worth the Price? serves as an important document in defining the meaning and worth of a college credential, and brings an informed voice to the current "college for all" debate.
Additional nonfiction books published by Now and Then Reader include:


New York Times contributor Ray Robinson's remembrance of Hank Greenberg and anti-Semitism in baseball, High and Tight;

Artificial Epidemics, an eye-opening examination of the dangers of medical activism by Stewart Justman

For a review copy of Is a College Education Still Worth the Price? or to schedule an interview with Richard Schwartz, please contact Chandos Erwin at press(at)nowandthenreader(dot)com or (310) 929-7927.

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Students give positive feedback to trayless dining

Campus Dining Services expects a 20 percent decrease in food waste through trayless dining.

By Sean Na Published Jan. 24, 2012

Since the summer of 2011, MU’s Campus Dining Services has been implementing a trayless dining policy in order to help reduce food waste. It was approved as an MU policy in August 2011.

The ultimate goal is to reduce food waste, but program might have other benefits, as well.

“The main purpose is that there is a lot of food waste being done simply because trays make it a lot easier to get more food than you need,” Missouri Students Association President Eric Woods said.

Woods said there were many benefits derived from keeping food waste down on campus.

“However, not only it is wasteful for the food but also it is a waste of money for Campus Dining Services,” he said. “Not to mention it is environmental, wasting less water, which actually works great, in (decreasing) water usage, which also saves money.”

Woods said the trayless dining policy also relates to student health issues. He said as trayless dining is being worked out, students will think more about the diet decisions they are making.

“They probably don’t need an extra piece of cheese cake,” Woods said. “You get filled with your meal, thinking ‘I don’t need a second plate.’ So, there is a health benefit there too.”

He also said even though there was a little bit of contention, the general response to this new policy has been positive so far.

“People realize that they are eating less, making an impact and not finding it too difficult to use tray-less plan.” Woods said.

In general, MU students who eat at Plaza 900, the largest dining hall at MU, have already recognized the meaning of trayless dining. Some say it becomes inconvenient because now they have to move around the dining hall holding individual plates with their hands.
“Trayless dining plan makes me eat less, (and I) end up wasting less food,” freshman Alexandra Greene said. “But I would still prefer having a tray because it is more convenient to move around with a tray.”

Other students said though it is inconvenient without a tray, they would still prefer trayless to reduce the food waste.

“With a tray, it is more convenient because I can take it around,” sophomore Jessie Lodderhose said. “However, thinking about the waste of food, I would prefer having a trayless policy, though it is little inconvenient.”

Woods said with the trayless policy, Campus Dining Services expects to see a 20 to 25 percent reduction in food waste.

“In the past with the similar exercises, we have seen upwards of 20 percent being reduced.” Woods said. “So there is a lot of potential.”