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MU pay raises look less likely

By Janese Silvey

Wednesday, January 25, 2012

University of Missouri workers might not see the 3 percent pay raise next year that administrators were eyeing as recently as last month.

If Gov. Jay Nixon's proposed budget becomes reality and higher education sees a 12.5 percent cut in funding — and if the UM System's Board of Curators caps tuition increases at the consumer price index — MU would face a \$12.6 million deficit. That's without factoring in raises, Budget Director Tim Rooney said.

Curators last month were reviewing a draft budget for next year that would have boosted the salary pool by 3 percent. But that was based on the assumption that state funding would be flat. Under the new scenario, adding a 3 percent pay raise would boost the deficit to \$23 million on the Columbia campus.

"That would be tough," Rooney told a group of employees yesterday.

"That's an understatement," Provost Brian Foster quipped from the audience.

Rooney spent nearly two hours outlining the current and future budget with faculty and staff members at Memorial Union.

MU has a \$510 million operating budget supported with state funding and tuition. That doesn't count auxiliary services, such as the health care system, athletics and the bookstore, that generate their own revenue and pay their own bills. It also doesn't take into consideration the federal grants, donations and targeted student fees that are restricted in use. Counting those operations, MU's budget is about \$2 billion.

But without state support and tuition to fund basic operations, the university would not generate those outside dollars, Rooney said.

"Without faculty, we get no grants," he said. "Without colleges, you have no donations. ... You have to have a School of Medicine before you have a hospital. You need a School of Journalism to have a KOMU television station."

Curators are set to discuss tuition rates at a meeting next week in Kansas City. Nikki Krawitz, the UM vice president of finance, said through a spokeswoman that administrators are still determining what they'll recommend. Any increase higher than the consumer price index, which was 3 percent last year, would require approval from the Missouri Department of Higher Education.

Through media reports, Nixon has warned colleges not to increase tuition beyond inflation this year.

Last year, he punished the UM System and other schools that raised tuition beyond 5 percent by withholding funds.

It would take an 8.5 percent increase in tuition to balance MU's budget with the proposed cut in state funding, Rooney said. That budget scenario takes into account increases in utilities, benefits and other mandatory costs, as well as tuition generated from the 885 more students expected on campus next year.

Some at yesterday's meeting questioned whether higher tuition increases would hurt enrollment. Rooney said he didn't think so. MU's tuition is below the averages in the Southeastern Conference, Big 12, Big Ten and the Association of American Universities.

"Every time we've increased tuition, we've had record enrollment," Rooney said. "That can't happen forever, but it's true."



MU hires transit service consultant

By Andrew Denney

Published January 25, 2012 at 4:19 p.m.

The University of Missouri has hired a consultant to assess students' travel needs and preferences, just a few months before the city is set to eliminate bus routes that serve south Columbia student apartment complexes.

Jacquelyn Jones, MU's vice chancellor for administrative services, said Wednesday that the university has hired Solstice Transportation Group Inc. of Atlanta to evaluate options for students and to provide suggestions on how students could have transit needs served better. She said the consultant will be paid \$65,000.

Amid budget constraints, the city has said it plans to eliminate the Black and Gold city bus routes in May when the current semester ends. Those routes bring students living in south Columbia apartment complexes to the MU campus.

Last year, the city had proposed college students pay an increased activity fee as a way to help fund the city's bus system. But Jones and representatives from the Missouri Students Association resisted the idea, saying the city was asking the university to move too quickly and that city leaders had used a threatening tone by arguing that the alternative would be deep service cuts.

Jones said a student-funded bus system in Columbia is still possible if the consultant finds it is the best option for students, the university and the city.

"We have not taken anything off the table for the consultant to review," Jones said.

She said the university does not have a plan in place to deal with the elimination of the routes, but she thinks MU has the parking capacity to deal with an influx of new commuters if that happens.

When asked why a third party was hired to complete the evaluation of student transit needs, Jones said the consultant's experiences with other university towns could allow MU to draw from a wide perspective.

"I think it's important to bring in someone who has a national perspective in terms of working with universities across the country," Jones said.

MU explores alternatives to Columbia Transit

By Hannah Cushman, Jacob Kirn

January 25, 2012 | 7:15 p.m. CST

COLUMBIA — The mayor's Transit System Task Force is broken.

MU has hired a consulting firm to assess the transportation needs of its students, an apparent break with Mayor Bob McDavid's plan to revamp the bus system using student fees. Solstice Transportation Group, based in Atlanta, will arrive in Columbia the week of Feb. 6 and be paid \$65,000 from MU Parking and Transportation Services funds.

Jackie Jones, the university's vice chancellor for administrative services and its representative on the task force, said the goal is to learn from students how they want their transportation needs met.

"It's hard to respond to possible solutions that have been put on the table without knowing what the needs of Mizzou students are," Jones told reporters Wednesday. "We have to ask, 'What are the unique issues at Mizzou?' That has to come from within Mizzou."

Mitch Skyer, president of Solstice Transportation Group, said the study will consist of anecdotal and data-based evidence compiled during site visits, interviews, field surveys and use of the city bus system.

Jones said she hopes the first phase of "information gathering" will be done by the end of March; Skyer said he intends to provide a list of recommendations to MU by the end of the semester.

McDavid said he doesn't have a problem with MU hiring its own consultant, but that he believes collaboration is the best model.

"I don't want to see us do three separate systems," McDavid said, referring to private apartment shuttles, university buses and city buses.

MU decided to hire the firm shortly after talks broke down between the city and university representatives on the task force.

The group, charged with revamping a financially troubled bus system, met twice. The most recent meeting, in November, was unproductive, said Jake Sloan, a student representative to the task force and Senate speaker for the Missouri Student Association.

"When the task force was created, it was my understanding that we would work toward a solution," Sloan said. "What it turned into was telling students, 'If you don't accept the city's proposal, bus service will end.'"

Columbia Transit's recent financial woes are well documented. They resulted in the formation of the task force last summer and a tumultuous City Council meeting last September, when the council cut the last hour of bus service from the Thursday and Friday night schedules and increased fares from \$1 to \$1.50.

Even with those unpopular moves, McDavid said the system remains unsustainable. According to city figures, Columbia Transit's budget is roughly \$7 million annually. Fares, federal grants and taxes contribute 80 percent of that revenue, leaving the city with a bill for the leftover \$1.5 million.

McDavid has said that the bus system's Black and Gold routes, which serve thousands of students in apartment complexes on Old 63 and Providence Road, will be eliminated if nothing changes. In a presentation during the November task force meeting, City Manager Mike Matthes said other changes are possible. The possibilities include:

- Ending Thursday and Friday evening service, as well as all Saturday service, in fall 2012.
- Removing peak service, which would extend wait times, also suggested to take effect fall 2012.

City officials invited owners and managers of apartment complexes along the Black and Gold routes to a meeting at City Hall on Jan. 9. They were told the apartments would have to pay a rate of \$62 per resident each semester to keep the routes going. That's a much higher price than they pay now.

Scott Sedgwick, general manager at Campus View Apartments off Providence Road, said some of the complexes will use the city at a higher cost, while others will explore private options.

"It forces the apartment communities to scramble now to ensure there will be transportation next year," Sedgwick said.

MU has no plan to intervene should the Black and Gold routes stop running at the end of the semester.

"There are all kinds of things being discussed," Jones said, "(including) city buses, the apartment complexes having their own buses as well as students deciding that the best thing to do is commute to campus."

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

MU ceremony honors Martin Luther King Jr. with humility and humor

By Jasmin James

January 25, 2012 | 11:36 p.m. CST

COLUMBIA — A near-full house packed the Missouri Theatre on Wednesday night for MU's annual lecture celebrating Martin Luther King Jr.

MU alumnus Ty Christian presented MU with a replica of the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial, which was accepted by Deputy Chancellor Mike Middleton. The event featured keynote speaker Larry Wilmore, an actor, author and television producer who works as the "senior black correspondent" on "The Daily Show with Jon Stewart."

Christian, who received his bachelor's degree in strategic communications from MU in 1977, served as the chief marketing strategist on the Martin Luther King Jr. National Memorial Project Foundation. With a team of just 15 people, he raised more than \$118 million toward the completion of the project to construct the replica.

Although Christian never had the chance to meet King, he said his life was influenced by King and his teachings.

"My grandmother embodied his spirit," Christian said. "She didn't participate in sit-ins. She didn't do the marches, and she wasn't hosed down by police officers. But she was consumed by the fact that she was equal."

The planning committee for the event also honored Pamela Ingram, the founder of Granny's House, an organization that provides after-school programming to underprivileged children. Ingram received the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Service Award for her work.

"Me getting this award is like recognizing one spoke of a bicycle wheel," Ingram said. "I'm just the loud mouth. There are so many others who made this all possible."

Following the exchange of awards and recognition, Wilmore offered a satirical commentary on race relations in the United States. He covered topics such as black privilege, the Obama Administration and the classification of blacks over the last two centuries. His satire surfaced

when he referenced a quote by radio host Don Imus, saying, "We've been everything from negro to colored ... to nappy headed hoes."

He also spoke of his personal distance from the term African-American, and he shared a few candid experiences with racism throughout his life and his career.

"We are so obsessed with race in this country," Wilmore said. "People want you to be what you're supposed to be. We question people based on stereotypes of what it means to be black, but black slang doesn't make you blacker. You didn't hear Dr. King say, 'Yo Yo Yo, I got a dream Bitches.'"

Wilmore intentionally pushed buttons during his speech. He touched on gay rights being compared to the civil rights movement.

"Gay is a hot issue right now, and I have a lot of empathy. But we don't have to come out (of the closet), and they were never slaves," he said.

Wilmore's routine was witty and insightful, but it shed little light on the future of King's dream. He side-stepped most questions during the Q-and-A session with subtle comedy, gestures, laughter or no answer at all.

"I'm disappointed that he was chosen to speak at an event honoring the legacy of Dr. King," Jamal Andress, a senior at MU, said. "While I appreciated his comedy and humor, it wasn't appropriate, and it really lost sight of why we gathered — which was to celebrate his dream and to inspire more change."



YAHOO! NEWS

Infants Grasp Gravity with Innate Sense of Physics

By Joseph Castro, LiveScience Staff Writer

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Most studies into infant cognition employ eye-tracking technology — psychologists can tease out what an infant is thinking and what she considers to be unexpected by following her gaze in different scenarios. This method, called violation of expectation, involves showing babies photos, videos or events that proceed as expected, followed by others that break everyday rules. If the infant understands the implicit rules, he or she will show little interest in an expected situation, but will stare at images of a surprising event.

But at what point in their development do babies begin to understand how the physical world works?

"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," Kristy vanMarle, an assistant professor of psychological sciences at the University of Missouri, said in a statement. "As the child develops, this knowledge is refined and eventually leads to the abilities we use as adults."

To come to this conclusion, vanMarle and her colleague, Susan Hespos, a psychologist at Northwestern University, reviewed infant cognition research conducted over the last 30 years. They found that infants already have an intuitive understanding of certain physical laws by 2 months of age, when they start to track moving objects with both eyes consistently and can be tested with eye-tracking technology.

For instance, at this age they understand that unsupported objects will fall (gravity) and hidden objects don't cease to exist. In one test, researchers placed an object inside of a container and moved the container; 2-month-old infants knew that the hidden object moved with the container.

This innate "physics" knowledge only grows as the infants experience their surroundings and interact more with the world. By 5 months of age, babies understand that solid objects have different properties than noncohesive substances, such as water, the researchers found.

.In a 2009 study, a research team (which included Hespos) habituated 5-month-old infants to either a blue solid or a blue liquid in a glass cup, which appeared to be the same when at rest. They tipped the glasses left and right, and poured the contents into other glasses, allowing the infants to form ideas about how the substances worked. Infants habituated to the liquid (but not the solid) weren't surprised

that straws could penetrate it, but were confused when straws couldn't penetrate the blue solid. The opposite happened with infants habituated to the solid.

Hespos and vanMarle also learned that babies have rudimentary math abilities : Six-month-old infants can discriminate between numbers of dots (if one set held twice as many dots as the other), and 10-month-old infants can pick out which of two cups holds more liquid (if one cup held four times as much liquid as the other). Also at 10 months of age, babies will consistently choose larger amounts of food — such as crackers — in cups, though only if there are no more than three items in any cup.

While infants appear to be born with intuitive physics knowledge, the researchers believe that parents can further assist their children in developing expectations about the world through normal interactions, such as talking, playing peek-a-boo or letting them handle various safe objects.

"Natural interaction with the parent and objects in the world gives the child all the input that evolution has prepared the child to seek, accept and use to develop intuitive physics," vanMarle said.

The study was published in the January issue of the journal WIREs Cognitive Science.

Senate confirms Pamela Henrickson as University of Missouri System curator

By Celia Ampel

January 25, 2012 | 7:24 p.m. CST

COLUMBIA — Pamela Henrickson was confirmed as a member of the University of Missouri System Board of Curators on Wednesday, said Farrah Fite, majority caucus communications director for the state Senate.

The confirmation came hours after Henrickson's hearing before the Gubernatorial Appointments Committee on Wednesday morning. The committee asked no questions of Henrickson during her hearing, Sen. Mike Kehoe, R-Jefferson City, said.

The Board of Curators will now have at least seven of nine members when it meets next week at University of Missouri-Kansas City. The board plans to vote then on tuition and fee increases at all four UM System campuses.

Curator Judith Haggard resigned Jan. 17, citing personal reasons.

Gov. Jay Nixon's press secretary, Scott Holste, said he was "not aware" of any existing timetable to replace Haggard.

Curator Craig Van Matre, who was nominated by Nixon, faces opposition in the state Senate, which must confirm his nomination to the board by Feb. 3 if he is to remain a voting member. The deadline is the same date as the curators' vote.

Kehoe said the Senate has 30 days from the beginning of its session, which was Jan. 4, to confirm Van Matre's appointment.

A decision about Van Matre's advancement in the confirmation process could come as early as Monday, when the appointments committee is slated to meet.

Board of Curators chairman David Bradley said the two empty seats present a problem for the governing body.

"It is important for the board to have a full complement of curators to discuss critical issues coming up, like setting next year's tuition and how to cope with drastic cuts in state aid," he said. "We hope the governor and state Senate work together to expedite the appointment and confirmation of new curators."

Gov. Nixon appointed Henrickson, a Jefferson City attorney, to the board in August 2011. She served the state for several years as general counsel for the Missouri Division of Design and Construction. She received a degree from the MU School of Law and is a member of the University of Missouri Alumni Association, according to the UM System website.

Kehoe sponsored Henrickson at her hearing Wednesday. He said he has known Henrickson and her family for more than 20 years.

"We're excited to have Pam as a representative for this congressional district," Kehoe said. "She understands the importance of education."

Kehoe said Henrickson, who didn't return calls to her office Wednesday, was concerned with the amount of money allocated for education in the state budget.

"I think she'll fight very hard for Missouri to improve funding for education," he said.



ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Uncertain future for Missouri curator nominee

Posted: Wednesday, January 25, 2012 3:43 pm

The nomination of University of Missouri curator Craig van Matre remains in jeopardy as Gov. Jay Nixon and Republican lawmakers tussle over the Columbia attorney's appointment.

The Columbia Daily Tribune (<http://bit.ly/w5UXph>) reported Wednesday that the governor had sought to withdraw the names of van Matre, curator Pam Henrickson of Jefferson City and several other nominees to various state boards from consideration by a Senate committee.

The request was rejected by Senate President Pro Tem Rob Mayer, R-Dexter. Mayer blocked van Matre's appointment last year to pressure Nixon to appoint a Mayer-supported candidate for another state board.

Withdrawing the nominations could have allowed Nixon to later re-appoint the two curators and extend the time they could serve without Senate approval until the Legislature adjourns in May. That strategy already happened twice with van Matre, who was initially appointed to the University of Missouri Board of Curators one year ago. His nomination again came under scrutiny last week when senators questioned his views on Republican leadership. He will have to permanently step down if his nomination isn't approved by early February.

"I don't understand any of this," said van Matre, who compared himself to a political pawn.

Henrickson's obstacle toward confirmation was removed Wednesday after the Senate Gubernatorial Appointments Committee approved her nomination, with the full Senate concurring later in the day.

Van Matre faces another committee meeting on Monday, Mayer said

Both van Matre and Henrickson continued to serve on the four-campus system's governing board while lawmakers were not in session last year. On Monday, Nixon's staff contacted the board

secretary, chairman and nominees to inform them that van Matre's and Henrickson's nominations were being withdrawn. Their names were removed from an online roster of board members.

The dispute comes as Missouri curators prepare to meet next week in Kansas City to consider a possible tuition increase for the 2012-13 academic year. The board typically consists of nine members, plus a nonvoting student representative, but board member Judy Haggard recently resigned for personal reasons.



Van Matre's curator nomination still in limbo

By Rudi Keller and Janese Silvey

Published January 24, 2012 at 12:53 p.m. Updated January 25, 2012 at 12:44 p.m.

JEFFERSON CITY — Columbia attorney Craig Van Matre's nomination for a seat on the University of Missouri Board of Curators has been caught in a political tug-of-war between the Missouri Senate and Gov. Jay Nixon.

This week, Nixon sought to withdraw Van Matre, curator nominee Pam Henrickson and about half a dozen other nominees from consideration, but Senate President Pro Tem Rob Mayer, R-Dexter, refused to accept the message. The appointments were all made before this year's session and must be confirmed or withdrawn by Feb. 3 or the nominees will not be able to serve.

"It is my plan to hold a hearing and hold a vote" on both curator nominations, Mayer said yesterday.

Henrickson's nomination was approved this morning by the Senate Gubernatorial Appointments Committee and later by the full Senate, among a slate of 25 total appointees to various positions. Van Matre, who is facing stiffer opposition, will be the subject of a committee meeting Monday, Mayer said today.

"I don't understand any of this," Van Matre said yesterday, adding that he felt like a political pawn.

Van Matre and Henrickson had been serving on the board since being appointed while lawmakers were not in session. On Monday, Nixon's staff contacted the board secretary, chairman and nominees telling them Van Matre's and Henrickson's nominations were being withdrawn. Their names were removed from UM's online roster of board members.

Board Chairman David Bradley said yesterday morning he was concerned about not having enough curators to fill the board's committees. Judy Haggard resigned earlier this month, so without the two nominees, the nine-member board would be down to six. But by late yesterday afternoon, Bradley said he had gotten word from Nixon's office that the confirmation process was moving forward.

"After discussions with Senate leadership regarding sequencing, the confirmation process will be moving forward," Nixon spokesman Sam Murphey said in an e-mail to the Tribune.

By withdrawing the nominees, Nixon could have reappointed them immediately and the Senate would have until lawmakers adjourn in May to consider them.

There was no controversy today at Henrickson's hearing. Van Matre's confirmation hearing last week was more confrontational as he was asked about opinion articles he wrote for the Tribune criticizing Republican legislative leadership.

"I think as some members have made clear, they have some concerns about his positions," said Sen. Kurt Schaefer, R-Columbia.

Van Matre's nomination to the board 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 confirmation 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.

During the special session in September, Nixon asked lawmakers to confirm his nominees, but Mayer refused. Again Nixon withdrew the nomination of Van Matre and made an interim appointment.



Mamtek failure spurs measure to require bond reporting

By Rudi Keller

Wednesday, January 25, 2012

NO MU MENTION

JEFFERSON CITY — The Mamtek collapse could result in new reporting requirements for bond issues from every city, county and public higher education institution in the state.

The Missouri Senate yesterday added the reporting requirements to a bill updating the kind of information available through the Missouri Accountability Portal, the online listing of how state money is spent. If it becomes law, each bond issue would be listed along with the revenue sources dedicated to repay it.

“One thing we have learned as we go through this Mamtek information, there is no place to go,” said Sen. Brad Lager, R-Savannah and sponsor of the amendment. “If I want to find out how much debt the city of Columbia has, there is no one-stop shop.”

Reports on new bonds would be due within seven days of the closing date on the loan. Political subdivisions and higher-education institutions would have 90 days after the bill takes effect to report on outstanding debt.

The Senate gave the bill first-round approval. It could vote to send the measure to the House as early as today.

Lager is a member of the committee assigned to investigate the failure of the Mamtek sweetener factory project in Moberly. The state supported the project by promising \$17.6 million in incentives, money that was never tapped by the company. The Mamtek failure left behind about \$37 million in unpaid debt to bondholders and millions more in unpaid debts to construction companies and equipment suppliers.

The Moberly Industrial Development Authority issued \$39 million in bonds backed by a promise from the Moberly City Council that it would annually appropriate enough money to make bond payments. The money was supposed to come from Mamtek, and in late October, the council decided it would not make the payments.

Lager's amendment was attached to a bill from state Sen. Brian Munzlinger, R-Williamstown, that began as a requirement that the portal list the amount and purpose of federal grants accepted by the state.

Imposing the reporting requirement would provide, for the first time, a clear picture of public debt in the state, Lager said. Many local bond issues are sound, he said, giving as an example sewer system bonds repaid from customer charges.

"That is very legitimate," he said. "When they go out and essentially issue appropriation bonds, that means there is nothing to back them," he said. "The first one of those to go bad and not get paid and that affects everyone."

Sen. Jason Crowell, R-Cape Girardeau, added public colleges and universities to the list of entities that would have to list their bond issues and identify the revenue sources that would repay them. Crowell has been angered for several years over Southeast Missouri State University's decision to borrow money to build a performing arts campus.

The school obtained money to repay the bonds from the MOHELA-funded Lewis and Clark Discovery Initiative.

Public higher education institutions have not been willing to cut back on building projects when the state can't afford them, Crowell said. "The economy has changed, but the spending of government has not. It has gone to the debt market."

If local governments can supply data about their bond debt, so can schools, he said. "They are still convinced you can live on 150 percent of your take-home pay."