A conversation with Tim Wolfe

New UM president ready to take the reins.

By Janese Silvey

Sunday, February 12, 2012

Two months after being announced as the next University of Missouri System president, Tim Wolfe takes the helm Wednesday.

Wolfe, who was raised in Columbia and graduated from the MU Trulaske College of Business, is a former president of an infrastructure software company. He has spent recent weeks visiting the four UM campuses and getting up to speed on higher education issues.

On Monday, he sat down with Tribune higher education reporter Janese Silvey to talk about what he has learned and his early priorities. Here is an excerpt from that interview, edited for clarity and length.

Tribune: You were a student at MU in the ’70s. What was the MU experience like then, and how do you think it has changed?

Wolfe: It was ’76 to ’80. I had a great time. I was in the business school. It was a great education, great foundation, had great advisers, great professors. I really enjoyed it. But my normal (routine was in) Middlebush Hall, which was somewhat dated. We had some ups and downs with our athletic teams. We had a town that was half the size of what it is now.

And then I come back now, and the campus is gorgeous. The buildings are new, and the buildings that were there have been updated. We have a student center. We have fantastic athletic teams here in Columbia.
Tribune: MU probably has a lot of amenities now that weren’t available in the ’70s. Improvements and expansion of services across the system cost money, though. Have you thought about how that growth has tacked on additional costs?

Wolfe: I didn’t really know what all the system did in the ’70s, nor did I care. As a student, you’re just trying to get as prepared as you can for whatever career, or graduate school if that’s where you’re going. I didn’t know what was in the system until I got the call about this particular opportunity. It really forced me to investigate what is in the system beyond just the obvious, which is the four campuses.

As I started to understand that and also understand being a land-grant institution — the mission of taking what occurs on the campuses from a research standpoint, from a health standpoint and getting that out to all 6 million citizens in the state of Missouri — that’s important. That’s a big part of what we do. And there’s the associated expense, people to support that mission.

So that’s what I uncovered early on before I was announced, as well as the two months I’ve been going to all the campuses, going to Extension, going to the health system and seeing in person what’s occurring. It’s not an insignificant expense, and it is complex, but the great thing about it is I believe we’re getting a great return on the dollars that have been invested either from a parent with a student here or from state tax dollars. I really think we’re doing great things here.

Tribune: You’ve met with Gov. Jay Nixon, lawmakers and congressional delegates. Do they see the return on investments?

Wolfe: What they all share is a passion for the University of Missouri System. Everybody has said, “How can I help?” and they also, to differing degrees, see the value of the system. What I hear over and over again is: “Get specific in terms of what I can do to help you continue success.”

What we have to do a better job of is saying — and I’m calling this “aware and care” — we need to make legislators, as well as all the constituents that we serve, we need to make them aware of what the system does on a daily basis and what that means to them.

And I don’t think about that in terms of districts or in terms of specific people. I think about that as there are 6 million Missourians here. We have the potential to touch every one of the 6 million. But to touch and help each one, we need to make sure that they’re aware of what the system can potentially offer them in terms of quality of life or standard of living. And once we make them aware, then we have to transition to why they care. Why would they get involved in one of the programs that we have, be it a 4-H program, be it telehealth where we’re helping a
doctor or care provider with the latest and greatest in medical processes, diagnosis, etc.? These are things we do on a daily basis.

When we can inform them and they see how that affects them personally, then they will get more involved with the system. And involvement can be they might participate in one of our groups as maybe a mentor for a student who's at risk. They can get involved with some of the constituency groups. They can get involved in terms of making a contribution if they're an alumni or donor. If they represent a business, they can get involved in some of the economic development initiatives that we do. They can get involved in a lot of different ways, but that involvement will come from them caring. It's something that is meaningful to them and what they do.

Tribune: I've lived in small towns around Missouri, such as Kearney. Most people there don't think about the UM System. How do you reach those people? I know the system has online videos showing how it advances Missouri, but most people aren't going to go online and watch them.

Wolfe: The way that you have the conversation with people in small towns is you participate in what they participate in. This initiative can't be done by just me. It has to be done by the entire team of employees of the system as well as constituency groups.

For example, we touch a million people a year through Extension services. So that's a sixth of the population there, and they're in every single county every single day.

On top of that, we've got this alumni network that's fairly significant for our four campuses. So if you start to think about how many alumni are still in the state of Missouri, you don't need six degrees of separation to figure that one out. You could probably get it in one or two degrees of separation to find somebody who is from Kearney who can go have conversations with people — maybe it's at a Rotary Club, maybe it's a Chamber of Commerce, maybe it's a school meeting — to just have a conversation about how the system serves this particular county.

And we've got all those statistics up on our website. But to your point, people in Kearney, just using that example, probably aren't hitting our website looking for what (the system does for them). So we have to make that visible, to have the conversation and direct them back to that.

Tribune: It sounds like this is a priority for you.

Wolfe: It is. If not the top priority, it's in the top three.

Tribune: One public perception is that universities have too much administrative overhead. Nixon seemed to reiterate that when he called on universities to be more efficient. Are you looking at where those efficiencies can be found?
Wolfe: I think the challenge the governor has given us relative to becoming more efficient is appropriate. I think we all can be more efficient. We have done a great job relative to improving the efficiencies by implementing shared services, where we can take common functions that occur in multiple places and do it in one place and save a lot of money. We’ve got to do more of that.

We need to become more efficient but at the same time continue to be effective and maintain the high quality in terms of what we’re doing in the teaching mission, the research mission, the service mission and supporting economic development initiatives.

Tribune: Some people have questioned whether the UM System has too many administrators. I realize you haven’t started yet, but have you thought about how University Hall could tighten its belt?

Wolfe: I will look at U Hall to tighten belts no differently than I would look at any of the four campuses, Extension or the health system. That view has to be consistent. I wouldn’t ask anybody to do anything I wouldn’t do.

Tribune: How would you describe your management style?

Wolfe: I would describe it as inclusive, collaborative and engaged.

Let me explain. We’ll start with inclusive. I’ve found that through my leadership career, the best way to solve a potential problem or find new market opportunity is to get brilliant people around the table and talk about what the possibilities might be. And through that conversation, almost every single time, what comes out of it is a better idea than what we individually could have reached. So that’s the way I’ve led throughout my career. It served me and us, the team, well in that we come up with better ideas.

But also, as part of the process of coming up with that best idea, there’s buy-in of the team that’s around the table. They support that specific idea or strategy, and then they can move away from that conversation and reach out to the team they represent and describe it because they bought into it. And the implementation is much easier because they’ve been part of the process.

I also think it lends well here. What this system is b‘lessed with are very, very bright, very, very creative people — more so than in business when you start to think about the faculty we’ve got available to us, as well as the students and staff. When you think about the potential for creative thought and new thinking, if you can tap into that, there’s so much opportunity in front of us.
So from an inclusive leadership style, I think that I’m more blessed in this role than I’ve been previously relative to that opportunity.

From a collaborative standpoint, ... you can make decisions, but you also have to make sure when you make decisions after being together, you continue to refine them and you keep those decisions and actions current and on the front burner.

And that requires a lot of conversation. My preference for conversation is face to face. Second is a live conversation on the phone. The least effective form of communication for me is email. (In some cases), email is effective. But it will never replace, in my opinion, the power of talking to someone face to face. And that’s where true collaboration comes in, is if you can talk to people face to face.

Tribune: So we won’t be seeing you on Twitter?

Wolfe: No. They asked me about that early on. I’ve followed some people. I think it’s really great. And I like technology, don’t get me wrong, it’s just not something that I’m going to be doing. Maybe in the future, but right now ...

UM spokeswoman Jennifer Hollingshead: Never say never.

Wolfe: You never can.

So the last leadership style was engaged. Thanks to Steve Owens and the rest of the general officers’ recommendation, once you get announced, you need some time to just absorb as much as you can before you start in the role. Which was a great recommendation, but I immediately filled up the calendar with trips to all four campuses, to Extension, to the health care system, and I also stopped off at a lot of other cities. I’ve been down to Springfield and Joplin and Carthage and some other stops. The reason why I did that was challenges and opportunities are much more compelling when you see them face to face. And you start to establish relationships.

If you can meet people face to face and you can have those conservations and if you’re an active listener — which I try to be, I have to be right now — you start to really experience and represent what it is they’re doing that’s so fabulous from a research standpoint or represent what this faculty member said to you. Our faculty, students and staff aren’t shy, and when you can meet with them and listen and show that you care, they’ll teach you more than you ever thought.

Tribune: On that note, have you met with faculty groups?
Wolfe: I have. At every stop on every campus — and I’ve been to all the campuses multiple times — part of it is a visit with faculty.

The other thing in every instance was I asked them to give me a tour as if I’m a prospective student or a prospective parent. One of the reasons for that is that I’ve got twins who are 17 who are looking at colleges. I looked at six colleges with my twins and wife last year, so I started to see how colleges represent themselves in different ways. And the way that you represent yourself should be reflective of what you stand for.

So I got to see all four campuses and how they represent themselves by student guides. And it was a great learning experience.

Tribune: A lot of people, including me, have compared you to your predecessor, Gary Forsee. How are you going to differentiate yourself? Do you feel like you’re in his shadow?

Wolfe: No. First of all, I’m honored and flattered that I would be compared to Gary Forsee. He’s a great leader and did some wonderful things. But over time, people will see that I’m different — not in a good or a bad way, I’m just different, as I should be. Everybody’s unique.

There have been some fundamental shifts and changes that he and the team implemented during his leadership time here — shared services, accountability measures — all of these things that make the UM System more transparent to those who are interested or invested in our success. You have those foundations in place, plus at the same time, you’re seeing great success — success being defined as quantity of students is at an all-time high, the quality of students as measured by ACT is higher than it’s ever been, (retention and graduation rates are up). There’s just wonderful bragging points that occurred during his leadership.

So what I think you can expect from me is to take the momentum that was built and achieved by Gary and team and build on that.

Tribune: You’ve met with Nixon, who some feel hasn’t been supportive of higher education because of his recommended cuts in funding. What’s your impression?

Wolfe: He’s passionate about the University of Missouri. He’s a wonderful supporter of a lot of aspects of the University of Missouri.

The state has a challenge right now, and the challenge is we are what we are, which is a low-tax state, and we have limited sources of revenue. We just don’t have enough general revenue to spread around. When the economy gets better, we’ll have more to spread around. We also have to look at alternative sources of revenue, specific dedicated taxes.
It’s our responsibility, and that’s my role as president of the UM System, ... to make sure everybody is aware of what we’re doing, and I firmly believe sound minds will prevail, and we will attract the right resources if we are more specific in terms of what we do.

Tribune: Columbia has changed a lot since you lived here.

Wolfe: For the better. It’s bigger, but the fundamentals are here. They did a great job with the balance between commercial, residential, the trails. The city has matured well.

But the thing that hasn’t changed is the people. I grew up here. I’ve been spending a lot of time on the East Coast for my career. I came back here, and I forgot how warm and approachable people are here. And my family has said the same thing. It is comforting to really feel like you’re home finally, and I do feel like I’m home. And the reason I feel like I’m home is the people, reconnecting with friends and building new relationships. That’s one of the best things about this job is that I came home, and I’m loving it.

Tribune: So, unlike your predecessors, you might stick around awhile?

Wolfe: I’m very hopeful I’ll stick around awhile. Lots of years. Potentially set a record for the number of years. I can’t see any reason why I wouldn’t.
Billionaire helps fund MU energy research

By Janese Silvey

The founder of an apparel company has given the University of Missouri $5.5 million to study new sources of clean energy.

Sidney Kimmel, founder and chairman of The Jones Group — which includes brands such as Anne Klein, Nine West and Gloria Vanderbilt — donated the money through his charitable foundation. Kimmel, who has never been on MU's campus, said in a statement that he chose the university because it has research capacity across several fields and is interested in benefiting society.

It is the largest gift from a private individual who has no ties to MU, said Catey Terry, a spokeswoman in the development office.

The money will be used to create the Sidney Kimmel Institute for Nuclear Renaissance, SKINR, which will involve researchers from the MU Research Reactor and physics, engineering and chemistry departments.

Mostly, MU scientists will be trying to figure out why excess heat has been observed when hydrogen or deuterium interacts with materials such as palladium, nickel or platinum under extreme conditions. Researchers don't know how the heat is created, nor can they duplicate the results on a consistent basis.

"It's a chance to turn cold confusion to real understanding and opportunity," said Rob Duncan, MU's vice chancellor for research.

Since researchers Martin Fleischmann and Stanley Pons declared they had observed tabletop energy, scientists have been scrambling to re-create the phenomenon. Once dubbed "cold fusion," some now refer to the process as a low-energy nuclear reaction. Some companies have
even been trying to find marketplace applications for the excess heat, even though it’s not consistent.

Duncan has called on the scientific community to stop trying to label the phenomenon before figuring out what causes it. The gift, he said, will let MU’s research team focus on the pure science without being distracted by trying to find uses for it.

If MU researchers were to be the first to figure out what is fundamentally occurring when excess heat is created, it would be incredible, Duncan said. But he also wants the team to focus on basic science, not the hype.

“Until we know what this is, I’m not going to speculate wildly about what it may lead to,” he said. “Let’s figure it out and go from there.”

Kimmel is one of four billionaires in the United States who have given more than half of their wealth to philanthropy, according to Business Week. Since 1993, the Sidney Kimmel Foundation and its foundation for cancer research have committed more than $750 million to philanthropic causes.

Kimmel first called Duncan after the latter appeared on a CBS “60 Minutes” episode about cold fusion. Two weeks ago, Duncan found out about the gift, which also includes some new equipment.

In his statement, Kimmel said he believes in investing in causes that benefit future generations. “This may be futuristic,” he said, referring to the science, “but when it comes to energy, our future is now.”
University of Missouri gets $5.5 million gift

The founder of an apparel company has given the University of Missouri $5.5 million to research clean energy.

Sidney Kimmel, founder and chairman of The Jones Group, donated the money through his charitable organization. The Jones Group includes such brands as Anne Klein, Nine West and Gloria Vanderbilt.

The university said in a statement that Kimmel has never been on the Columbia campus but decided to donate to the university because it has research capacity in several fields. The university says it's the largest gift in the school's history from someone with no ties to the school.

The Columbia Tribune reports the money will help create the Sidney Kimmel Institute for Nuclear Renaissance, which will involve researchers from the MU Research Reactor and physics, engineering and chemistry departments.
Sidney Kimmel Foundation awards $5.5 million to MU scientists

By Allison Pohle
February 10, 2012 | 4:59 p.m. CST

COLUMBIA — The Sidney Kimmel Foundation awarded scientists at MU a five-year, $5.5 million gift to help focus on efforts in the search for new energy sources. The paperwork was finalized two weeks ago after the foundation determined that MU was the best fit for the award. The university then began to establish the Sidney Kimmel Institute for Nuclear Renaissance.

“This gift is unique in two really important ways,” Robert Duncan, vice chancellor for research at MU, said. He said this is the first multimillion dollar gift from someone who isn’t affiliated with MU, and to the best of his knowledge, this is the first time the foundation has awarded a grant to a Midwestern university.

Four staff scientists will be supported directly by the grant. Duncan also expects that 10 to 15 post-doctoral students, professors and graduate students will be partially supported by the fund. The scientists will come from various backgrounds including physics, the MU Research Reactor, engineering, material science and chemistry. The institute will focus on studying the effects of hydrogen when it interacts with palladium, nickel or platinum under extreme heat. Researchers are still unsure as to how the excess heat is created. The institute will focus on the creation of heat, as well as supporting research groups who can make a scientific determination on the findings.

Sidney Kimmel, the founder and chairman of The Jones Group Inc., established the Sidney Kimmel Foundation in 1993. The foundation, along with the Sidney Kimmel Foundation for Cancer Research, has awarded more than $750 million to philanthropic causes.

“I chose the University of Missouri for this important gift because it is a comprehensive university, experienced in using its deep scientific research capacity across many fields with its firm commitment to serve the public good,” Kimmel said in a news release. “This may be futuristic, but when it comes to energy, our future is now.”
The University of Missouri system is renovating its administrative headquarters at the same time officials cite nearly $37 million in critical campus repairs.

The Columbia Daily Tribune reports that the four-campus system is tapping savings for the $1.5 million worth of University Hall renovations. The repairs include asbestos removal, new carpet, new ceilings and a teleconference center.

A university spokesman says the project’s primary goal is to make improvements necessary under the federal Americans with Disabilities Act. The project also includes a security camera installation and other upgraded safety measures.

Some professors on the Columbia campus are questioning the project’s timing in light of tight fiscal times. The university system wants to raise tuition by an average of nearly 7 percent in the coming academic year.
Duncan talks ‘cold fusion’ at Saturday Science

By Janese Silvey

Sunday, February 12, 2012

If a device said to create energy by fusing common materials goes on the market this year, Rob Duncan told a crowd at the University of Missouri he’ll be one of the first in line.

“When they show up at Home Depot, I’m going to go out there with my credit card,” said Duncan, MU’s vice chancellor of research.

Italian engineer Andrea Rossi invented the Energy Catalyzer, or E-Cat, which he claims produces energy by fusing nickel with hydrogen to produce copper, a reaction he says releases excess energy. Because Rossi is trying to profit from his invention, he hasn’t let other scientists review his data. That’s why many have denounced it and suggested Rossi’s device is a scam.

Duncan reserves judgment. After giving a talk on the “cold fusion” phenomenon at MU’s Saturday Science series, he said he planned to buy two E-Cats — one to heat his home and another to take apart and figure out. After all, Duncan isn’t interested in how tabletop energy could be applied — at least right now. He’s more interested in the physics behind it.

A day after announcing that a clothing company founder, Sidney Kimmel, gave MU $5.5 million to study clean energy, Duncan spent nearly two hours explaining to a general audience the possible scientific scenarios behind what he calls anomalous heat effects, once referred to as cold fusion.

MU researchers from various departments and the research reactor plan to use the funding to see whether they can not only create but also replicate excessive heat production.

“The success rate is about 20 percent, so we know the conditions must be very specific,” David Robertson, an MU chemistry professor who’s going to be involved in the project, said in a
statement. “It’s a hit-or-miss reaction, which is the reason why we’re trying to understand it, and we’re using every tool in the toolbox to find the answer.”

Duncan has been interested in the phenomenon since CBS’s “60 Minutes” asked him to serve as an outside skeptic for a 2009 episode on work being done at an Israeli lab. Duncan took the trip and concluded that something — he was careful to not conclude what — was creating heat. Some scientists still scoff; others even get emotional about it, Duncan said. To them, he says: “Get over it.”

Duncan is calling for a government grant that would be awarded to researchers in the field. That way, he said, scientists are open with the findings, rather than protective of potential profits.

“It’s always better if foundational science is done as a public investment,” he said. “That’s because you can’t patent physics and what happens in physics. Once science is understood, entrepreneurs can find new ways to apply it and reduce it to practice. It’s upside down right now.”
Timing of UM admin office renovation is questioned

By Janese Silvey

Columbia Daily Tribune

Saturday, February 11, 2012

Forty-eight percent of the buildings on the University of Missouri System's four campuses are in bad shape, an administrator told the Board of Curators earlier this month.

And those backlogged building needs include nearly $37 million worth of projects deemed critical, said Nikki Krawitz, vice president of finance and administration for the UM System. So why are construction crews working at University Hall and not on campuses?

The system's administrative office has been undergoing renovations since 2010. UM spokeswoman Jennifer Hollingshead said the project isn't related to the campus needs because it's being paid for with system savings.

The renovations will cost an estimated $1.5 million, she said. Work has included asbestos removal, new ceiling sections and new carpet. A small teleconference center also was added and is expected to cut down on travel costs.

Mostly, though, the project was needed to bring the building up to Americans with Disabilities Act standards, including the addition of a ramp, and to improve safety. Now, visitors to University Hall are required to check into a front office and don't have access to the main elevator without assistance from an employee. A security camera also has been installed. The safety upgrades were needed, in part, “because of this building’s remote location off-campus,” Hollingshead said.

At a recent meeting of the MU chapter of American Association of University Professors, members questioned the timing of the project, which included relocating and upgrading the suite of UM general counsel offices. Steve Owens, who returns to his role as general counsel next week, served as interim president through much of the project.
The timing was coincidental, Hollingshead said. Needs were identified in 2004 but the work was delayed until 2010 because of budget constraints.

“The renovation project was approved and construction was under way before he was named interim president,” Hollingshead said in an email. “The project did not change once he became interim president and the general counsel’s space received the same treatment as other areas of the building.”

Funding for the project came from savings realized from year-end balances left over when positions went unfilled and administrators cut other expenses, she said.

The MU campus historically has used state funding to pay for academic buildings that — unlike athletics or dorms — do not generate their own revenue streams. Since state monies have dried up, MU has been issuing bonds for building projects by dedicating a portion of the maintenance budget to pay down the debt.

It’s a strategy former UM President Gary Forsee developed in 2009 and so far has helped MU gut and renovate Tate and Switzler halls.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

UM System upgrades headquarters as campus repairs on hold

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
February 13, 2012 | 7:23 a.m. CST

COLUMBIA — The University of Missouri System is renovating its administrative headquarters at the same time officials cite nearly $37 million in critical campus repairs.

The Columbia Daily Tribune reports that the four-campus system is tapping savings for the $1.5 million worth of University Hall renovations. The repairs include asbestos removal, new carpet, new ceilings and a teleconference center.

A university spokesman says the project's primary goal is to make improvements necessary under the federal Americans with Disabilities Act. The project also includes a security camera installation and other upgraded safety measures.

Some professors on the Columbia campus are questioning the project's timing in light of tight fiscal times. The university system wants to raise tuition by an average of nearly 7 percent in the coming academic year.
UM System’s 2011 research record a mixed bag

By Janese Silvey

Missouri is in a race for jobs right now, and the University of Missouri System can help.

That’s from Tim Wolfe, who starts as UM System president on Wednesday. After weeks of touring the state, he’s convinced Missouri should be showing companies that its flagship university is ready to provide research and development expertise and college graduates willing to work.

“If we can connect that higher education potential with the business community and the economic development initiatives that are occurring at the state level, I believe we will be very convincing in attracting more businesses and more jobs to the state,” Wolfe said.

The UM System already has business tentacles across the state — an incubator in Columbia, several research parks and a plant science center in Mexico where companies already have developed products.

A new economic plan in Kansas City directly involves UMKC in three of five goals, and the UMSL campus is collaborating with other colleges and businesses on that side of the state, Wolfe said.

And more inventions happening on campuses are getting noticed by outsiders interested in commercializing them. Last year, the university signed 110 licenses or option agreements — more than double over 2010.

The UM System’s 2011 economic development report seems to indicate a mixed bag of activity, but Mike Nichols, vice president of research and economic development, cautioned that the numbers don’t tell the whole story.

For instance, gross licensing income to the university dropped from $10.1 million in 2010 to $7.76 million last year. That decrease happened when Zegerid, a heartburn pill, became available in a less expensive over-the-counter form, Nichols said.
Previously, Zegerid was only available as a pricey prescription. Nichols expects the licensing income from that MU-developed pill to bounce back as sales continue to rise.

The 2011 report also shows five startups coming out of UM research last year, down two from the year before. But those are only startups as narrowly defined by the National Science Foundation, Nichols said. In reality, dozens of startups are being formed by students and faculty who do not receive national grant funding, he said.

Since 2006, 25 NSF-defined companies have sprouted from university research. Last year, the UM System spent an all-time high of $330 million from grant awards on research endeavors — even as state funding to the university has decreased.

“We started on a path about four years ago, and we’re still on that path,” Nichols said. “I don’t see anything changing other than going up.”
Editorial: As one bubble ends; another is just getting started

There's a certain poetry to the notion that the remnants of the housing bubble might be used to ward off the next financial catastrophe facing the middle class: the looming student loan bubble.

But it's not a very soothing verse, nor is it a valid notion.

On Thursday, Missouri Attorney General Chris Koster came to St. Louis to outline the financial settlement reached by attorneys general in 49 states that will offer some financial relief for homeowners who either lost their homes to foreclosure or are paying for mortgages in which they owe more than the home is worth.

Five of the nation's biggest banks will pay $25 billion as a punishment for their role in the crisis that still grips much of America's middle class. Illinois gets about $1 billion; Missouri, $195 million.

It's good that the banks that played such an oversized role in causing the crisis will pay a price.

But it's really too little too late. Even $25 billion is a drop in the bucket when Americans have $700 billion in underwater mortgages.

Some folks who lost their homes will get a check for $2,000. They won't get their homes back.

Others, barely hanging on to their mortgages, will be able to refinance at more reasonable rates, perhaps reducing their payments to a sustainable level.

But then, if they've got a kid in college or hope to send one there, the other shoe will hit.

Tuition at public universities in Missouri is about to go up. Again. Gov. Jay Nixon had proposed cutting the state's higher education budget by 12.5 percent. Most universities have been mulling tuition increases in the 7 percent range.
Mr. Nixon knows this is bad for the middle class. On Thursday, as Mr. Koster was in St. Louis, Mr. Nixon was meeting with reporters, editors and publishers at an annual gathering in the Governor's Mansion. He lamented the coming student loan bubble, noting that last year the level of student loan debt in the nation surpassed credit card debt for the first time.

Mr. Nixon plans to use $40 million of the mortgage settlement money to ease the planned cuts for colleges and universities. Now their budget cuts might be closer to 3 percent. Mr. Nixon hopes this means tuition hikes will be no higher than the increase in the Consumer Price Index.

The annual two-semester tuition for Missouri residents at the University of Missouri's flagship Columbia campus now is $8,928, not counting room and board, books and supplies. The CPI last year rose 3.2 percent. If it rises the same amount this year, that would amount to a tuition hike of $285.

If you apply the increase to the entire cost of attending the university for a year, $22,216, the increase would be $710 per year.

That's serious money for folks in the middle class taking out student loans they can't pay back even as they get minor relief for the mortgage loans they also can't pay back.

Still, the mortgage settlement is a step in the right direction. So is the decision to restore some higher education funds. Still, both, massive problems remain, and our state and national governments no longer seem capable of, or even interested in, dealing with them.

Economic bubbles are colliding. One appears to be deflating; the other is yet to pop.
Missouri, Illinois make plans for bank settlement money

The bank settlement announced Thursday will bring the added bonus of extra money for higher education in Missouri, helping ease the sting of funding cuts for public colleges and universities.

State officials estimate that struggling homeowners will get help to the tune of $155 million, with the bulk going to those who are "underwater" on mortgages. But officials also plan to use $40 million of their share to ease proposed higher education cuts.

Officials in Illinois touted the estimated benefit to their state — $1 billion — but said the money would all go to mortgage-related programs, with no plans to use a portion for budget help.

"The dimension of the disaster created by the mortgage industry would quickly eat up that money," said Steve Brown, spokesman for Illinois House Speaker Michael Madigan, D-Chicago. "The notion that we might be able to set some of it aside (for other purposes), I'm not hearing that."

But in Missouri, Attorney General Chris Koster said he and counterparts across the country had discretion over how to spend some of the money directed to their states.

Koster "clearly wanted to keep the state portion of it as flexible as possible," said Linda Luebbering, budget director for Gov. Jay Nixon. "He made sure, as part of the agreement, that it would be like general revenue," available for any program.

Nixon had previously proposed $106 million in cuts to four-year and two-year public colleges and universities.

If the Legislature accepts Nixon's plan to use money from the bank settlement, colleges and universities would see a 7.8 percent cut in their state funding instead of 12.5 percent. For example, the windfall would restore $18.78 million to the University of Missouri and $452,481 to Harris-Stowe State University in St. Louis.

The Missouri House Budget Committee chairman, Rep. Ryan Silvey, said he supported Nixon's proposal.
"I'm glad the governor is finally starting to listen to legislators and the people of this state who make education a priority," Silvey said.

Nixon said he hoped colleges and universities could hold tuition increases to the inflation rate. He noted that state law requires them to get waivers from the Department of Higher Education if they want to exceed that cap, which will be set at 3 percent for the coming year.

Campuses were still digesting the news Thursday, but several schools expressed optimism that tuition increases, while still inevitable, would be less severe.

Missouri State University interim President Clif Smart was on his way to Jefferson City for a Thursday afternoon meeting with the governor. Like other campus chiefs, he was happy with the news but noted that schools still are looking at a steep higher education cut that will have to be offset by some sort of tuition boost.

"It's still a significant chunk of money for us," Smart said.

At Southeast Missouri State University, President Kenneth Dobbins said in a statement that a reduced cut would allow the school to avoid an increase that would exceed 3 percent.

**A spokeswoman for the four-campus University of Missouri system, which is now looking at a 6.5 percent increase in tuition and fees, said administrators are evaluating the changing landscape and its impact on the size of an increase.**

**Illinois' plans**

Illinois is expecting more than $1 billion in payments and services for the state's homeowners under the settlement, according to Attorney General Lisa Madigan. Most of that amount will flow directly from the banks to qualified homeowners, according to Madigan's office.

The settlement will be administered primarily through the attorney general's office and the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation.

The settlement includes $1 million for the IDFPR to continue its ongoing investigative and enforcement work regarding home mortgages.

"Over the past years, we've seen how the flawed mortgage financial system has hurt Illinois families," Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn said in a prepared statement. "This settlement will help those most affected by the housing crisis, and will establish new rules for mortgage lending that will be easier to understand and enforce."

Lisa Madigan's office said Thursday there were no figures available on how many Illinois homeowners or former homeowners might be affected.
Her office outlined other action that will be taken under the settlement:

- Struggling borrowers will be considered for a loan modification rather than automatically face foreclosure.
- No loan will be referred to foreclosure while a modification is being considered.
- Borrowers will be able to appeal if they are denied a loan modification.
- Mortgage servicers have to provide a point of contact for borrowers and make it easier for them to check on the progress of their loan modification applications.
- Servicers will have to meet strict timelines for dealing with borrowers.

Missouri's money

- $86.5 million to reduce principal for borrowers whose homes are worth less than they owe and are behind on payments.
- $38 million for refinancing for borrowers whose homes are worth less than they owe but are current on payments.
- $31 million in payments to victims of mortgage abuse whose homes were foreclosed on from 2008 through '11. Estimated individual payment: $2,000.
- $40 million for the state's public colleges and universities.

Illinois did not provide a breakdown of its $1 billion.

_Jake Wagman and Tim Barker of the Post-Dispatch contributed to this report._
Tim Wolfe’s term starts with tuition decision

By Janese Silvey

Sunday, February 12, 2012

On Monday, the incoming University of Missouri System president said he thought tuition proposals on the table were a fair response to a proposed 12.5 percent cut in state funding.

Tim Wolfe has since learned how quickly Missouri’s political winds can change.

A day later, Gov. Jay Nixon announced he would soften the cut to 8 percent. On Thursday, Nixon met privately with college presidents to urge them to keep tuition rates below inflation. And by Friday, Wolfe concluded the increase in state dollars would “definitely have a positive effect” on final tuition proposals.

A former president of an infrastructure software company, Wolfe takes the helm of the system on Wednesday, which means he’ll be in charge when curators meet Feb. 20 to set tuition rates.

Earlier this month, Nikki Krawitz, vice president of finance and administration, outlined a plan that would increase tuition and fees by varying degrees based on campus and department.

At MU, the plan was to increase tuition by 7.5 percent.

That proposal was a reflection of budget challenges — including the proposed 12.5 percent decrease in state funds — without putting the entire burden on students and parents, Wolfe said Monday.

It would’ve taken an 11 percent increase across the board to seal Nixon’s original budget cut, according to Krawitz.

The increase in proposed state dollars and lower-than-expected future tuition revenue likely means budget warnings are still in place.
In a letter sent to employees last month, interim UM President Steve Owens warned funding shortfalls would lead to lost jobs and reduced services.

Administrators will keep in mind three things when making decisions, Wolfe said, parroting the letter — maintaining quality education, supporting campus priorities and making “hard decisions.”

“We’ve got to stop doing things that just aren’t affordable,” Wolfe said. “That’s hard to do, and it’s not unique to higher education.”

Before ending a service or practice, however, Wolfe said he would make sure those affected had a seat at the table.

One thing Missourians should keep in mind, Wolfe said, is that tuition across the UM System has increased by a rolling average of 2.7 percent since 2007.

“That’s dramatically lower” than other states that have implemented double-digit increases, he said.

And private and for-profit colleges have increased tuition even more.

When politicians, such as President Barack Obama, publicly chide colleges for excessive tuition, Wolfe said the UM System gets thrown into a large category.

“Everybody in this higher education vertical gets hit with the same ugly stick,” he said. “Well, that’s not appropriate.”

But Wolfe, a father of twins looking at colleges, said he’s confident families see the value they’re receiving when they visit any of the four UM campuses.

“They know when they come here, they’re going to get a quality education,” he said. “From our mission of teaching, research and service and value for the cost to students and parents, this is a great deal. And we’d like to continue to be a great deal.”
Governor urges Missouri universities to limit tuition raises

Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon says the state's colleges and universities should cap any tuition raises at the rate of inflation for the next year, The Columbia Daily Tribune reports.

The schools have been contemplating increases in the face of a Nixon budget proposal that would cut $106 million from public higher education. However, a big mortgage settlement promises a windfall for the state, and Nixon says he would funnel $40 million of that toward college financing.

The University of Missouri-Kansas City already had said it wouldn't raise tuition by much because the population it serves is sensitive to price. But the University of Missouri had been weighing a 6.5 percent average boost to tuition and fees at its four campuses — roughly double last year's inflation — before news of the settlement, according to the report. Schools need waivers to increase tuition by more than the cost of living increase.

Nixon also indicated that an upcoming meeting with leaders of state schools would include presentation of a $10 million financing opportunity tied to federal grant money, the report says.
JEFFERSON CITY — Gov. Jay Nixon told higher education leaders during a closed-door meeting yesterday that he would like them to keep tuition hikes at or below the general rate of inflation this year.

The message was presented as a request, several college and university presidents said after the meeting, which lasted about an hour. During an earlier news conference with editors and publishers from across the state, Nixon said larger tuition hikes would create issues of affordability and access.

“You would hope that would be the ceiling,” he said at an annual lunch hosted by the governor for The Associated Press and the Missouri Press Association.

As he left the meeting, incoming University of Missouri President Tim Wolfe told a reporter the meeting was “a great conversation, and we’re looking forward to working with the governor and his team.” Wolfe will officially begin work Wednesday.

Nixon brightened the budget picture for colleges and universities this week when he allocated $40 million from the national mortgage fraud settlement to higher education. The money will mean state two- and four-year colleges and universities will share a $66 million cut in funding next year.

Nixon’s original budget for the coming year had cut $106 million, the same amount he had sought to borrow from college reserve funds before abandoning that idea.

Even after announcing the larger cut, Nixon had sent warnings about large tuition increases. The UM Board of Curators discussed a 6.5 percent average hike in tuition and fees last week; for the Columbia campus, the increase would be 7.5 percent.
A tuition increase limited to the rise in general prices would be 3.2 percent. Wolfe declined to commit himself to that figure yesterday.

"The Board of Curators for the University of Missouri System makes the decision on tuition, so we're working on what's the best thing to balance affordability, access and the challenges of the budget," Wolfe said.

Nixon has shown in the past that he will discipline schools that don't meet his expectations on tuition. Last year he took out extra money lawmakers put in for higher education and then cut more from the UM and Missouri Western State University budgets because of their higher tuition increases.

His original budget called for giving UM $348.25 million, a cut of $55.4 million from the amount lawmakers appropriated last year. The university will receive about $19 million out of the $40 million Nixon has restored.

Under state law, schools that increase tuition by more than the cost-of-living increase must apply for and receive a waiver from the Missouri Department of Higher Education. If the waiver is not granted, a school's funding can be cut.

Nixon made his additional cuts this year after the waivers were granted.

In addition to asking schools to hold the line on tuition, Nixon said he will present college and university presidents with a new funding opportunity worth $10 million. Based on a program at the University of Central Missouri, the program enrolls high school students to give them a head-start on college. The program includes corporate-sponsored apprenticeships and an early graduation.

Nixon said the state will begin taking applications in March to use the federal Community Development Block Grant funds.

"We want to make college education as affordable and accessible as possible, and we also want to make sure we provide a high-quality education for students," Nixon said.
Measure would cap administrative spending at colleges

By Janese Silvey

Saturday, February 11, 2012

A University of Missouri professor wants voters to have a chance to cap how much money is spent on administration at public universities and colleges.

Galen Suppes, a chemical engineering professor and member of MU’s chapter of American Association of University Professors, circulated proposed language this week that he would like to see on a future ballot. It states that no more than 2 percent of tuition revenue should be spent on employees who teach less than two courses a year and make salaries higher than the average faculty salary. Employees on sabbatical, those engaged in fee-based clinical services or researchers paid partly with grant dollars would be exempted from the proposed rule.

"The thinking is that when students pay tuition, they should have an expectation that those go directly to the things that provide them an education — facilities, supplies, teaching," Suppes said. "For the most part, administration does not do much in the way of educating."

Suppes is rallying other members of AAUP to help him word the ballot initiative and someday help collect the signatures needed to get it to voters.

UM System administrators earlier this month told the Board of Curators several times that the system’s administrative costs are lower than peer averages. In 2010, the last year comparable numbers are available, 8.7 percent of general operating costs went to administration across the four-campus system. That compares to an average of 10.9 percent at other public doctoral universities.

MU budget director Tim Rooney uses a higher number in his presentations, saying the UM System spends 29.1 percent on administration. But that includes academic support and student
services. Without those, the numbers drop to the percentages UM cites, MU spokesman Christian Basi said.

Rooney uses the UM System figures, rather than campus numbers, because some administrative duties — general counsel, government relations, administration of benefits and internal auditors — are handled by the system, so costs are not realized at MU but might be included in other colleges' administrative figures.

But Suppes doesn't think comparing MU to all doctoral institutions is fair. First, he said, such comparisons don't take into account that other states outrank Missouri in public support. Missouri ranks 44th in per-capita spending on higher education.

Secondly, he said, top administrators at some other universities also teach. "This university has a huge number of administrators who never even have contact with students," he said.

The UM System does not receive tuition dollars. Its $48 million budget comes from state funds and investment income, spokeswoman Jennifer Hollingshead said.

Under Suppes' proposal, system administrators would not be allowed to tap into tuition — including any future fees assessed to online students — unless they start teaching.

A study from the American Council of Trustees and Alumni published in 2010 praised Missouri as being one of three schools that cut administrative costs between the 2002-03 school year and the 2007-08 year. That report shows MU increased funding to instruction by 48 percent from during that period while cutting administrative costs by 39 percent.

The same report said administrative costs at Texas Tech, the University of Kansas and the University of Oklahoma doubled during the five-year period.
Engel saga throws process into question

By Janese Silvey

Saturday, February 11, 2012

Greg Engel’s colleagues in the University of Missouri’s College of Engineering want him gone.

They say he’s rude and accuse him of being racist and sexist. In a letter to MU administrators, 18 professors say he’s no longer an effective teacher. They filed charges against him in hopes of getting him fired.

A faculty committee recently voted 6 to 1 that Engel’s behavior doesn’t warrant termination. Provost Brian Foster challenged the decision, saying the committee used too high of a standard when members considered the evidence. Engel’s fate now rests with Chancellor Brady Deaton, who has asked for more information before deciding what to do with the case.

Meanwhile, Engel goes to work every day, even though he hasn’t been teaching since he was suspended from the classroom last year. He gets paid $98,000 annually — a salary unchanged from last year because he was one of few campus workers who didn’t get at least a 2 percent raise.

Engel says his research is better than ever. He’s snagged more funding for projects and says he’s writing more journal articles. But he also spends time countering the charges against him. “This trivial pursuit the administration is making me go through is wasting a lot of my time,” he said.

Engel once got an anonymous note from a co-worker calling him a “worthless piece of shit.” For a while, he wasn’t getting faculty emails. Colleagues ignore him.
A faculty irresponsibility letter from December 2010 outlines a history of problems with Engel dating back to 2002, when he was granted tenure. The letter says students have complained about Engel leaving class early and not treating them with respect.

In an online evaluation system, ratemyprofessor.com, Engel gets mixed reviews. One entry from December describes him as a “man’s man and a really cool teacher” who is “not like some of these stuck up PhDs.” A review from 2010 calls him enthusiastic. Both say he’s easy to talk to. Reviews from 2004 aren’t as positive, with one student saying: “Don’t expect any sympathy [sic] from this guy.”

The bulk of the faculty irresponsibility letter describes Engel’s alleged treatment of four female students who filed a separate grievance against Engel last year. Three of the students, who are Asian, accused him of racial discrimination because he gave them zero grades for allegedly plagiarizing. A panel of Engel’s co-workers — who all signed the letter — claimed they found no evidence of plagiarism.

Some say the faculty irresponsibility letter is questionable because it contains at least one error. It says Engel confirmed to the Tribune the race and gender of the three Asian students, thus violating federal student privacy rights. But that wasn’t the case. A Tribune reporter asked Engel to confirm their race and gender, but he declined, citing confidentiality. His attorney, George Smith, did confirm the information. Those who signed the letter did not call the reporter to double check that accusation.

The fact that 18 professors signed onto the charges without verifying the content is concerning, say several members of the MU chapter of the American Association of University Professors.

Sudarshan Loyalka, a curators’ professor in MU’s Nuclear Science & Engineering Institute, said he respects the faculty members but doesn’t think they should have signed. “All of them signing a letter without verifying all their facts negated the credibility of the charges,” Loyalka said.

It also reflects poorly on faculty, said Stephen Montgomery-Smith, a math professor. “As professors, we’re supposed to be seeking the truth and maintaining high standards of integrity,” he said.

The letter also contained information about the process that Engel went through to get tenure. “That information was private and confidential, according to university rules, and some of it was not even correct,” Loyalka said.

Smith wonders if some of the signees, especially those who have yet to be tenured, felt political pressure to sign.
The faculty committee that decided Engel should not be terminated made its decision because it thought the evidence wasn’t “clear and convincing.”

Foster says the committee should have used a “preponderance of evidence” standard, meaning that members should have made their decision based on whether the accusations were more likely than not to be correct.

The section of the UM System’s rules guiding the process doesn’t specify what standard of evidence is needed. Other sections of the UM rules, which would come into play if the committee were to recommend Engel’s dismissal, say a committee should “be convinced by the evidence” before recommending dismissal.

A transcript from the faculty committee hearing shows Deputy Provost Ken Dean told the committee that Foster is not recommending Engel’s termination but was asking the committee to make that recommendation.

Committee Chairman J. Wilson Watt then said he wanted to have it “on record” that the provost would not seek Engel’s termination if the committee didn’t make the recommendation.

“You have,” Dean replied. “You have invested nine months of your life, your professional life here, and the provost respects the process, that this is a faculty-driving process.”

Engel is not convinced. “I’ve been tried in two courts now, and I’ve been found not guilty in two courts,” he said. “Apparently that’s not good enough for them.”

Engel’s public troubles date back to May 2010 when he complained that his bosses had taken a research project out of his hands and reassigned it to the wife of a top MU administrator.

Engel wrote a white paper that snagged MU a $2 million federal earmark to help the Office of Naval Research, or ONR, develop a more efficient electromagnetic launcher.

His department chairman, Noah Manring, and engineering Dean James Thompson accused Engel of stalling on the project. In a statement sent to the Tribune in June 2010, administrators said Engel was not satisfying ONR requests.

Thompson reassigned the work to Annie Sobel, an adjunct professor in the department of electrical and computer engineering who is the wife of Rob Duncan, vice chancellor of research. Administrators said she was qualified to lead the project because of her graduate engineering degree and extensive military background.

Foster acknowledged that the appointment had the appearance of a conflict even though he didn’t suspect intentional wrongdoing.
In a 2010 email to Engel, Deputy Chancellor Mike Middleton said Sobel was being added to the team as an administrative liaison to ensure the proposal was finalized in a timely manner. "You were asked to remain on the project as the technical lead and you refused," Middleton wrote.

Middleton blamed some confusion on the fact Engel was identified as "principal investigator" prematurely in the earmark process. The principal investigator should not have been named until a contract was negotiated, he said.

Engel argued that principal investigators traditionally are named as part of a funding proposal, not after funding.

Engel continued to try to stay in contact with ONR officials after being pulled as project lead, but Manring told him to stop and warned him that if he continued his behavior, it would be considered criminal harassment. "It is in your interest to comply," he wrote.

Just before the summer 2010 semester, the College of Engineering canceled an online circuit theory course Engel planned to teach. Manring blamed it on Engel's abrasive behavior.

Later in the year, when the four female students complained about him, his bosses stripped Engel of all classroom duties.

"The removal from all teaching rather than from the specific course in which the accusing students were enrolled represents a serious over-reaction to the situation," the faculty irresponsibility committee wrote in its report.

A separate student grievance committee cleared Engel of racial or gender discrimination.

But that committee did conclude that Engel acted inappropriately because he didn't clarify to the students what constituted plagiarism. Members recommended that Engel write apology letters to the three students, which he did. Foster also asked Engel to apologize to a fourth female student who complained that Engel hadn't talked to her before filing a charge against her for calling his lab "retarded" and jokingly telling him to "shut up." Engel reluctantly wrote the letter.

Members of the MU chapter of the American Association of University Professors, or AAUP, said having to write apologies sets a bad precedent because Engel wasn't being charged for ineffective communication skills.

The national AAUP office is watching the case. Associate Secretary Bob Kreiser sent Deaton two letters last year urging him to follow AAUP procedures.

"I assure you that Professor Engel has been and will be afforded his full due process rights in the future," Deaton wrote back.
Engel plans to let a jury decide. He filed a lawsuit in Boone County Circuit Court last month accusing administrators of breaching contracts and retaliating against him. He is seeking $5 million in punitive damages.

Asked how he would sum up the last two years, Engel paused.

“I don’t know how I would describe it,” he said. “Wasteful. Unpleasant. Ridiculous.”
MU faculty panel suggests higher standard for firing

By Janese Silvey

Saturday, February 11, 2012

The evidence needed to fire a tenured University of Missouri professor should be clear and convincing, some faculty members say.

Gordon Christensen, a professor in the School of Medicine, proposed a resolution at Thursday’s MU Faculty Council meeting that would require “clear and convincing” evidence to be used when faculty members face severe sanctions. University bylaws currently don’t say what type of evidence is needed when a professor is facing charges of faculty irresponsibility.

The conversation comes on the heels of a committee decision that evidence against Greg Engel, a professor in the College of Engineering, was not “clear and convincing” enough to fire him. Provost Brian Foster thinks the group should have made the decision based on “preponderance of evidence,” a lower standard that would require members to base decisions on whether the accusations were likely to be correct. Chancellor Brady Deaton is asking for more information before proceeding.

Faculty members Thursday did not specifically discuss Engel’s case, which brought to light the fact that the rule doesn’t set a standard of evidence. Christensen is asking council members to pass a resolution that would add “clear and convincing” to the policy.

Eddie Adelstein, an associate professor of pathology and anatomical sciences, said he’s seen numerous cases where committees vote in favor of a faculty member only to have administrators overrule them. “We need to make sure the process we actually have is followed by administrators,” he said. “This seems fair.”

Some faculty members said they were under the assumption the higher standard of evidence would be used in these cases. The MU rules say faculty will follow guidelines set by the American Association of University Professors, which state “clear and convincing” evidence is needed.

“Clear and convincing evidence was the rule of the road in practice,” said Tom Marrero, a chemical engineering professor. “Whether or not it’s written in the code is immaterial. All of a sudden someone’s coming up with preponderance of evidence? This is like gang mentality or kangaroo court where we’re going to come up with a reason to hang someone.”
Faculty Council is expected to vote on the resolution at its next meeting, which is Feb. 23 in Room 203 of Memorial Union South. Deaton and UM President Tim Wolfe are expected to be guests.
University of Missouri system action revives discussions of domestic benefits at MSU

The effort to extend employment benefits to domestic partners at Missouri State University resumed publicly, nearly two years after its Faculty Senate overwhelmingly recommended such a measure.

Except for one opposing vote, the Faculty Senate on Thursday afternoon approved a resolution formalizing its support for efforts at the University of Missouri system to provide the same benefits for all state university employees. The University of Missouri Faculty Council last year passed a resolution in support of benefits for domestic partners.

The MSU Faculty Senate is waiting for future development on the issue at the state’s largest public university system.

"If MU takes the lead, it looks more promising," said Terrel Gallaway, chair of the Faculty Senate, echoing past remarks by university officials that it is better for the University of Missouri System to push first for benefits for same-sex partners.

While several private universities in Missouri including Drury University offer benefits to domestic partners of their employees, no public university in Missouri does so.

At MSU, arguments for such benefits have centered on competitiveness in attracting and retaining talents.

Though the effort has had the support of faculty, staff and students at MSU, the university’s highest level has been slow to take action. Former presidents Mike Nietzel and Jim Cofer had asked any action to be delayed, said Jef Cornelius-White, a professor at the department of counseling, leadership and special education, at the Faculty Senate meeting.

Now, the MSU Board of Governors is in transition, as new members are being added, Cornelius-White said.

By voicing the support for effort at MU, MSU gets to move the conversation along, he said.
Kerry Slattery, assistant professor of technology and construction management, opposed the resolution Thursday. He declined to comment.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Columbia explores bus systems in other Midwestern college towns

By Jacob Kirn
February 11, 2012 | 6:00 a.m. CST

COLUMBIA — It's been a chaotic year for public transportation.

Budget constraints have forced fares up, service hours down, and the black and gold routes, which take thousands of students to and from campus each day, could stop running in May.

Beginning next week, the city will sponsor a series of trips to explore bus systems in other Midwestern college towns. City Manager Mike Matthes organized the trips — to Ames, Iowa, on Feb. 17 and to Lawrence, Kan., on Feb. 24 — in hopes of exposing city and college leaders to successful bus systems in similar-size cities.

Matthes said he hopes to schedule a trip to Urbana-Champaign, Ill., home of the University of Illinois, in March.

Ames and Lawrence partner with Iowa State University and the University of Kansas, respectively, by using student fees to fund part of their bus systems' budgets — the model Mayor Bob McDavid has continually endorsed for Columbia.

Matthes said the trip is a good opportunity for the mayor's Transit System Task Force, charged with identifying a solution to transit problems, to gather with other leaders to do "field research."

"The goal is to get everyone at the same place at the same time," Matthes said.

Seven of the 10 members of the task force, however, have said they will not attend either of the trips, including all the representatives from Stephens College, Columbia College and MU.

Jackie Jones, MU's vice chancellor for administrative services and its representative on the task force, said she would send Falisha Humphrey, a
representative from Solstice Transportation Group, the consulting firm hired by MU to assess the transportation needs of students, in her place.

“If they can’t make it I understand,” Matthes said. “(Each trip is) an entire day, and I get that.”

Three student representatives from MU, Anne Ahlvers, James Hatler and Todd Oberlin, who are separate from the task force, confirmed they would attend both trips. They are members of the Tiger Transit Movement, a student organization meant to educate students about public transportation.

“The group was formed in collaboration with PedNet,” said Brittany Perrin, the group’s founder. “It’s an outlet to reach the students and find out what they want.”

Sixth Ward Councilwoman Barbara Hoppe said she would attend the trip to Ames. She is the only council representative to confirm her attendance on either trip.

Hoppe said it was important for decision-makers to attend because they’ll notice things about the bus systems that you can’t just by reading about them.

“It’s to experience firsthand how it works, how it functions,” she said.
Gordon Lamb dies; was interim head of UM system

Gordon Lamb, who died Monday, spent the last dozen years of his career in higher education leading Missouri institutions through transition, including a stint as interim president of the University of Missouri system.

Mr. Lamb assumed the top post beginning with Elson Floyd's departure in April 2007 and held it until Gary Forsee arrived in 2008. Forsee, who stepped down last year, kept Mr. Lamb on as an executive vice president.

Those who knew Mr. Lamb said he was far more than a place holder.

Scott Charton, a former UM spokesman, told the Columbia Daily Tribune that Mr. Gordon was effective as interim leader in part because he didn't want the job permanently.

"He had the freedom of his principles, and he exercised that freedom in defense of the university's research mission," Charton said.

Mr. Lamb died Monday (Feb. 6, 2012) in Columbia, Mo. He was 77 and had been in ill health.

Interim president Stephen J. Owens praised Lamb's contributions to the university, and called him "an ardent and tireless supporter and protector of academic freedom."

He added, "Gordon's passion for quality public higher education translated into a long-lasting legacy of more than 40 years of important contributions for which we are most grateful and appreciative. We will miss him."

Mr. Lamb got a bachelor's degree in music education from Simpson College in 1956, a master's degree in music from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 1962 and a doctoral degree in philosophy from the University of Iowa in 1973.
He served as interim chancellor of the University of Missouri-Kansas City for about a year
beginning in 1999, then went on to serve as senior vice president of EFL and Associates, an
educational consulting firm.

As interim president of the MU system, Mr. Lamb strongly opposed in 2007 a proposed
statewide ballot initiative that would have outlawed embryonic stem cell research. The
measure failed. He also established the Missouri 100, a presidential advisory group of state
leaders and businesspeople that promotes the role of the university.

During his academic career, Owens said, Lamb also served as interim chancellor at the
University of Wisconsin-Parkside and subsequently as president of Northeastern Illinois
University in Chicago from 1986 to 1995. Before his Northeastern presidency, he served for
nearly 12 years at the University of Texas-San Antonio as vice president-academic affairs and
founding Director of the Division of Music.

Lamb wrote numerous books, articles and musical compositions. As a music professor and
choral conductor, he conducted concerts and festivals in 17 states and across Europe. In
addition, he received several awards, including the National Award for Teacher Education’s
Most Supportive President or Chancellor from the American Association of Colleges of Teacher
Education.

Mr. Lamb retired in 2009. He served for one month as interim president of the University of
Central Missouri in Warrensburg in the summer of 2010.

He is survived by his wife, Nancy, three sons and five grandchildren.

Funeral services will be private in New London, Iowa.