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ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Colleges to prove worth for state funds

BY TIM BARKER - tbarker@post-dispatch.com > 314-340-8350 | Posted: Tuesday, April 17, 2012 12:20 am | (2) comments.

NO MU MENTION

First their budgets came under the knife. And now the nation's colleges and universities are facing new scrutiny from legislators and governors who want assurances that scarce tax dollars aren't being wasted.

The message to higher education leaders is simple: "If you want more money, prove you deserve it."

In the jargon of policymakers, it's called performance funding.

And little by little, it's making its way into higher education budgets across the nation, with schools getting more or less money based on their graduation rates and a host of other variables. Missouri recently laid the groundwork for its version of performance funding, while Illinois is in the first year of its fledgling initiative.

Nationwide, the movement is driven by a combination of factors, including the widely held belief that higher education funding levels — which have fallen dramatically — won't recover for many years. That has budget-minded legislators and governors fretting over how to get the most out of dwindling resources and what they see as inefficient campuses, said Julie Davis Bell, education group director for the National Conference of State Legislatures.

"They're frustrated about completions. They're frustrated about transfers. They're frustrated that students are taking six or seven years to graduate," Bell said.

The more-aggressive states are looking to award significant chunks — 25 percent or more — of higher education funding through these performance systems, she said. They see it as the best way to convince campuses that the status quo isn't good enough.

Missouri became the latest state to embrace performance funding this month when the Coordinating Board for Higher Education accepted the recommendations of a task force that has been studying the issue for several months.

The governor and Legislature will have the final say on the matter. But as proposed, the system would use performance funding to distribute portions of future increases in higher education funding. Existing budgets would not be affected.

Each school would be graded in five categories. They could vary from school to school but would include things like the number of degrees awarded, graduation rates and freshman-to-sophomore retention rates. An improvement of one-tenth of a percent in a given category would be worth 20 percent of the school's performance-funding budget.

"They're only judged against their own previous performances," said Paul Wagner, deputy commissioner for the Missouri Department of Higher Education.

It's still early in the game, with next year being the first in which performance funding could be included in the state's budget process. So far, schools appear supportive.

Among other things, the approach offers guidance in terms of what the state wants from higher education, said Troy Paino, president of Truman State University.

"It gives us some direction on what these priorities are and where we need to invest our resources," Paino said.

Others see it as a chance to demonstrate to a skeptical public that much already is being done on state campuses.

"It will show the public that we are serious about quality higher education," said Kenneth Dobbins, president of Southeast Missouri State University. "More people will appreciate what higher education does."

Illinois has taken a decidedly different approach with its system, setting aside a portion of its higher education budget and letting the schools fight over it.

For the 2013 fiscal year, the pot of performance money is \$6.5 million. That's only half a percent of the state's \$1.3 billion higher education budget. But the percentage could grow in future years, said Alan Phillips, deputy director of fiscal affairs for the Illinois Board of Higher Education.

Schools are scored on a variety of variables, including degree completions and the amount of money spent on each degree produced. Schools receive bonuses for low-income and minority students, and for producing degrees in the critical science, technology, engineering and math fields. Community colleges also have a system, but theirs is based more on enrollment numbers.

The final results in the first year provided little drama, with no school gaining more than an extra one-tenth of a percent of funding, and no school losing more than one-fifth of a percent of its funding.

MU School of Law dean Dessem leaves legacy of community

By [Celia Ampel](#)

April 17, 2012 | 6:00 a.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Almost every week, MU School of Law Dean R. Lawrence Dessem has lunch at Shakespeare's Pizza with five students from his civil procedure class.

He asks where they're from, what type of law they're interested in and what classes they're taking — but most of the time, he already knows. That type of personal touch is characteristic of Dessem, according to students, alumni and faculty who have worked with him.

"He knew something about you," said second-year law student Lauren Collins, who had lunch with him last year. "You didn't have to sit down and explain your story."

After 10 years at MU, Dessem, 60, plans to step down as dean at the end of the semester to return to teaching. His last few years have been marked by efforts to improve job placement for graduates of the Law School, especially after its rankings in U.S. News & World Report dropped almost 30 spots in one year.

When those rankings were released in April 2010, Dessem held a meeting to hear students express their frustrations. Since then, he has taken bold steps to address the situation:

- The career services office staff has expanded from two to six, and resources and programming have changed in an attempt to be more focused and useful.
- Dessem also pushed to decrease the size of the incoming class from 150 students to 135 to better reflect the job market for law graduates and to help career services focus its efforts.
- Employment rates for MU Law School graduates, which declined sharply from 2008 to 2009, are now on the rise.

Turning degrees into careers

In the past few years, the career services department has reached out to employers and the school's 6,700 alumni to help secure jobs for MU law students, Dessem said. Students are

invited to alumni receptions and other networking events. The department also began using software called Symplicity, which allows alumni to volunteer to review resumes and cover letters, conduct mock interviews or let students shadow them at work.

The software also makes job postings, on-campus interview announcements and job-hunting tips available in one online location. Job postings are searchable by type of law and geographical area.

"We didn't have a way for students to actively search jobs before," said Lisa Key, assistant dean of admissions, career development and student services. In addition, a teleconferencing center that opened in fall 2011 allows students to talk to prospective out-of-state employers and to record mock interviews for later review.

When she was a first-year MU law student, Collins had minimal experience with the career services department. She found a summer position without seeking the office's help.

"That was in part because I had heard the horror stories about career services," she said. But she had a positive experience working with the department this year. Director of Career Development Grant Shostak helped her tailor a cover letter and resume, and secure a summer position at the Miami-Dade County Public Defender's Office.

"He connected me with lawyers in the Miami area but ultimately gave me the tools to secure a position for the summer," she said. Making those connections is at the heart of Dessem's approach to overhauling career services, he said. He and the career services staff should be proud of efforts to improve the department, said Robert Bailey, assistant dean and director of the Center for the Study of Dispute Resolution.

"The career services is now absolutely in first-rate shape," said Bailey, who has worked at MU for more than three decades. Employment rates for MU School of Law graduates have improved from 78.5 percent employment for the class of 2009 nine months after graduation to 82.3 percent for the class of 2010. The data for the class of 2011 have not yet been officially released, but the percentage is in the high 80s, Key said.

Dealing with the effects of the recession

When the economic recession hit in the middle of Dessem's tenure, the job market for law school graduates became bleak. The number of people employed in legal services declined 7.8 percent nationally from 2007 to 2011, according to the ABA Journal.

"The challenge has been, in the last couple years, legal employment for our graduates and for graduates across the country," Dessem said. His excellent relationship with university administration helped him make changes to benefit MU law students, Bailey said.

By gaining the support of Chancellor Brady Deaton and Provost Brian Foster, the dean was able to boost staff in the career services department, adding directors of public service and public interest, professional development and diversity initiatives and outreach.

"Once it was determined that that was an area that needed bolstering, Larry immediately began lobbying central administration," Bailey said.

Dessem also received the university's endorsement on a decision to decrease the size of incoming classes from 150 to 135, starting with the class that entered in fall 2011. MU will cover the reduction in tuition revenues for at least four years, Dessem explained in a letter last year that announced his return to full-time teaching.

The smaller class size is intended to better reflect the job market and to teach topics such as contract drafting and corporate deals in a hands-on way.

"You can't do that if you have 50 people in your class," Dessem said.

A big challenge in the Law School's future will be retaining faculty as the recession recedes and other universities are able to make attractive offers to some MU law professors, he said. But the small Law School has an atmosphere of collegiality that makes it less likely for professors to take those offers, Dessem said.

"Money is a motivator," he said, "but so is your environment."

Bailey said the good relationship among MU law professors, as well as between faculty and students, is apparent.

"If you walk around the halls, you'll see faculty here, you'll see their doors open," he said. To Dessem's credit, the current Law School faculty are "astoundingly good," Bailey said.

"I've been here 33 years, so I've seen a lot of people come and go," he said. "One of the things that I can tell you is that our faculty today is as engaged and scholarly ... as in the time I've been here."

A top-notch teacher

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A top-notch teacher

Last week, Dessem took a day off — sort of. Third-year law student Katie Vogt had won the chance to be "dean for a day" through a Women's Law Association auction, so they swapped roles.

While she discussed admissions with another dean and prepared to call alumni for year-end donations, Dessem was holed up in the library in jeans, a T-shirt and a ball cap, getting ready to take notes for Vogt in her morning class.

Vogt asked if she could teach Dessem's civil procedure class, but that was one duty he would not trade. Teaching is one of Dessem's loves, and he is highly regarded as a professor, Bailey said.

"Not only is he knowledgeable about the subject matter, but he is a very energetic, enthusiastic teacher," he said.

When Vogt took Dessem's class, he made civil procedure understandable and gave straightforward exams. He is "a very open kind of professor," she said. In class, he asks questions of students who are obviously looking at their computers and not paying attention, Vogt said.

"He will rapid-fire call on people," she said. Bailey said he was on vacation when Dessem called him to say he would be stepping down as dean at the end of this school year.

"My first question was: Will you stay on the faculty?"

Dessem said he would.

'One of the nicest people out there'

The feeling that the Law School is a community is what makes it special, Dessem said.

"It would be very hard to graduate from this law school without other students and faculty knowing who you are," he said.

He gets to know many of his students, remembering details about their lives from those Shakespeare's Pizza lunches years later. Vogt said he always connects her with her home state of Tennessee, where he used to work. Eric Bohl, a 2006 MU School of Law graduate, visited Dessem in his office earlier this month on a stop in Columbia. Bohl works as chief of staff for U.S. Rep. Vicky Hartzler in Washington, D.C., and said Dessem and his wife, Beth, visit Bohl every time they are in the city.

"They make you feel like a part of the family," Bohl said. No one has ever complained about the dean except to say he's too nice, he said.

"He's not pretending — he really is one of the nicest people out there," he said. Dessem said being too nice has never been an obstacle for him as a dean. He has never found a correlation between friendliness and a lack of strength as a leader.

"One can disagree, and one can disagree at a fairly fundamental level and still be quite civil and polite and quite nice," he said.

Working for the students

His favorite moment as dean each year is commencement. He has taught about half of every graduating class, and it makes him proud to see the students walk across the stage as their parents cheer. A lot of graduates end up in smaller communities, where they get elected to the school board or quickly become state legislators.

"Most of these people are not going to be on the cover of news magazines, but their communities will be better for their service," Dessem said.

He also gets excited when students who have succeeded in big cities come back to visit, as Bohl did.

"This makes it all worthwhile, that we get to train and mentor people who are going to go out and change the world," he said. Gary Myers, associate dean of research and a professor of law at the University of Mississippi School of Law, will take over for Dessem on Aug. 15.

Dessem said he has loved being a dean, but he will be glad to join a long tradition of MU School of Law deans returning to teaching.

"At some point, you step back, you catch your breath and say, 'I've accomplished what I wanted to accomplish,'" he said.

theman eater

Letter to the Editor: Take a stand for higher education

By Ben Levin, MU junior, bnlevin@mail.missouri.edu

Among the 50 states, Missouri ranks forty-seventh in state funding for higher education per student. That means that only in three states do public universities receive less financial support than in Missouri. But as Gov. Jay Nixon's proposed budget for 2013 shows, it could be worse. In January, the governor laid out a plan to cut 12.5 percent from higher education funding. That's \$105.9 million in all — \$45 million of that coming from MU.

The University of Missouri already suffered a 14.2 percent cut in funding over the last two years. Losing more than 25 percent of state financial support for higher education in the span of three years is unacceptable, and on Thursday, April 26, students will bring that message to Jefferson City at The #MoreForLess March.

The consequences of more higher education cuts are too high to keep silent. With funding from the state at lower levels, the UM System Board of Curators has been forced to rely on tuition rates. That means college becomes less accessible and less affordable, especially for low-income families. It also means students are pushed further and further into debt. At MU, the average debt for a graduate is \$18,000, and that figure is growing.

This trend of higher tuition will continue unless we can stop the drastic shift in the cost burden from the state to students. In the past 30 years, students have gone from funding 27 percent of university operations to 48 percent, whereas the state has gone from paying 64 percent to 36 percent.

Disproportionate budget cuts also hurt the quality of education at MU. Our university's faculty salaries rank near the bottom of those at Association of American Universities member-schools. Without funding, those salaries just aren't competitive, and, as a result, our faculty retention suffers.

Now is the time to show that students won't let public universities go to the chopping block. So, what can you do? Stay informed on the issue. Write your state legislator and ask them to protect universities and education. And join students from public universities across Missouri in rallying at the state capital on Thursday, April 26. The Missouri Students Association is providing free breakfast and transportation to Jefferson City for students gathering at the Student Center at 9 a.m. April 26. Be sure to sign up online at msamoreforless.com. This is how students can make their message loud and clear at the state capitol: Make education a priority, not an easy target.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Folklorist, banjoist talk at MU about digitizing humanities

By Elizabeth Laubach

April 16, 2012 | 10:40 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Folklorist and ethnomusicologist Alan Jabbour walked into an almost-full **room of MU's Reynolds Journalism Institute with banjoist Ken Perlman, a wine bottle sticking out of Jabbour's fiddle case.**

Jabbour, a world-renowned folklorist, and Perlman, a world-renowned musician, were brought to MU on Monday afternoon by Mizzou Advantage, an interdisciplinary program designed to network people involved in research and create opportunities that further the university's position in higher education. He and Perlman were in town following the weekend's Big Muddy Folk Festival, at which they both appeared.

The pair's visit was not just for the enjoyment of local artists, but also for the benefit of collaborators who came to learn creative techniques for archiving humanities in Missouri by hearing about Jabbour and Perlman's experience recording folk music and the traditions surrounding it. Jabbour has been recording folk music throughout eastern and southern America off and on for more than 30 years, while Perlman spent time in the 1990s recording folk music in the far eastern Canadian islands.

They were invited to speak by Berkley Hudson, a magazine journalism professor at MU and co-principle investigator of Mizzou Advantage's "Gateway to the West" project, an effort to digitize the university's humanities archives by creating websites that document culture unique to Missouri.

Hudson said he hopes visits like this one can help those working on the project create public scholarship — that is, free public knowledge available to everyone via the Internet.

Stories and song

Jabbour and Perlman introduced each song they played Monday afternoon with a story about the tradition behind the tune or the way it was passed on to them, sometimes tying in lessons to be learned from recording cultural traditions.

"You don't have to know about the history of the banjo and fiddle to appreciate (the music), but you can gain a deeper understanding of the music with that knowledge," Hudson said. "People like Alan Jabbour can help us appreciate."

Jabbour and Perlman set the pace for their talk with "Stoney Point," a tune passed down to Jabbour by Henry Reed, a Virginian folk musician who mentored him on the fiddle. Jabbour said that he in turn passed the tune on to another folk musician, further influencing the tradition. He described the complexity of the relationship between the collector and what is being collected by referring to the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle of quantum mechanics: "You can't observe something without being a factor in what's being observed."

Jabbour said he first started tromping around the Blue Ridge Mountains in search of folk traditions that would be lost in lore if not for his recorder while earning his master's degree in English at Duke University. He later founded the American Folklife Center — an ongoing organization of his findings — for the Library of Congress and spearheaded their Archive of Folk Song. He was also the first director of the Folk Arts Program at the National Endowment of the Arts.

Perlman is also a connoisseur of recording folk traditions. In the 1990s, he spent time in an extremely isolated island community in Canada that he described as at least a generation behind in terms of culture and technology. There, Perlman said, the fiddler was the center of entertainment and the third most important person in the community — behind the clergy and local government.

When EarthWatch, an environmental nonprofit, began organizing Perlman's recorded items, the banjoist insisted that the website include not just collected music and photography, but also the stories about how integral the fiddler was to the society.

Wrapping up the event, the duo played "The Fiddler's Drunk and the Music is All Over," but not before Perlman explained that, in those Canadian islands, fiddlers were fed alcohol to keep them playing, though it was a fine line before the fiddler would be no longer able to play.

Later Monday evening, Jabbour and Perlman gathered again at RJI for a jam with other local musicians playing banjos, fiddles, accordion and stand-up bass. The 15-person jam featured many local music legends. Most were grey-haired, save a young blond boy brave enough to step up and play the fiddle. Among them was Dave Para, artistic director of the weekend festival. Halfway through the jam, he appeared in a pre-recorded interview on a TV in the room. They pointed and laughed at the TV, but kept playing on.

Mizzou Notebook: Season tickets and barnstorming

By Terez A. Paylor - Posted on 16 April 2012

COLUMBIA | The University of Missouri announced today that it will implement a waiting list for new football season-ticket buyers this year.

It's unclear how many season tickets will be made available this season, but it's believed the school issued about 40,000 last year (including students). MU officials expect that number to rise this season, thanks to the school's much-anticipated move to the Southeastern Conference, and the hope is that the list will make the process go smoother.

The decision does not directly affect 2011 season-ticket holders, who have until April 30 to renew. But starting Wednesday, those who did not purchase season tickets last year must join the waiting list if they now want to purchase them.

A \$100 deposit is required to join the list, but this does not guarantee tickets. Season ticket requests will be assigned using the Tiger Scholarship Fund Priority Point System, which rewards fans who donate the most money to the university. The deposit will be applied to the cost of the tickets, should you become eligible to purchase them.

Starting Wednesday at 6 p.m., fans can register for the waiting list at mutigers.com. The deadline to do so is 5 p.m. on Tuesday, May 15. New season tickets will be allocated by the end of June.

Here are this year's season-ticket prices for Missouri's seven-game home schedule:

Public: \$379 (seats may also require an annual per seat donation to the Tiger Scholarship Fund)

Faculty/Staff: \$262 (Full time benefit eligible, faculty/staff status will be verified. Maximum of 2 season tickets at the faculty/staff rate. Additional tickets at the faculty/staff rate may be purchased for dependent children under 18 years old.)

Tiger Zone: \$269 (Tickets will be allocated in south end zone seating area. No per seat donation required.)

Young Alumni: \$245 (Maximum of two season tickets may be purchased for Mizzou alumni who have graduated within the last three years (Winter 2009). Alumni status will be verified.)

Touchdown Terrace: \$750 (Located at the South end zone field level, next to Mizzou team locker room entrance. Fans will enjoy padded chairbacks, private restrooms, hospitality tent, complimentary concessions, game programs and more! No per seat donation required.)

Mizzou seniors coming to KC

A number of outgoing seniors from this year's Big 12 tournament-winning men's basketball team will take part in a barnstorming tour across the state of Missouri, and Kansas City isn't being overlooked.

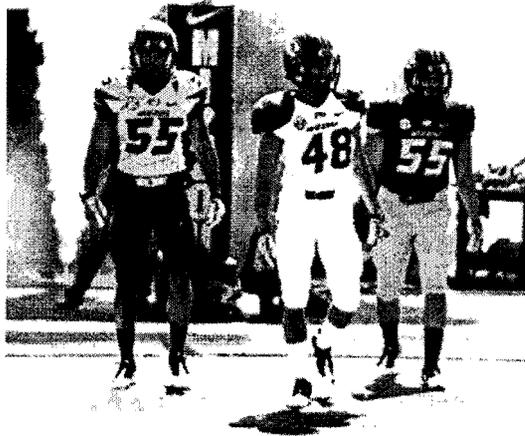
Missouri seniors Kim English, Matt Pressey, Marcus Denmon (Hogan Prep) and Steve Moore (Truman) will face a collection of local talent April 25 at Truman High School.

Tickets cost \$10, and autograph opportunities will be available. Contact Truman athletic director Eric Holm at 816-521-5350 for more information.

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Mizzou's new uniforms: Thumbs up or down?

BY REID LAYMANCE | Posted: Monday, April 16, 2012 12:58 pm | (14) comments.



THE WATER COOLER:

Do you give Missouri's new uniforms a thumbs up or thumbs down? And will the new styles really help them land recruits?

BRYAN BURWELL:

I love them. Very cool, hip, sweet, clean, dope or whatever the current catch phrase is for 18-year-old kids. And to all those grumbling traditionalists who say that Alabama doesn't have to re-design uniforms to draw five-star recruits, I remind you of one significant thing: THEY ARE WINNING NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS!! They don't have to change unis. But sometimes in order to go from a good program to a great one, this is what you have to do.

VAHE GREGORIAN:

Thumbs up. I think they're fresh without being garish, although I suppose some of the 24 potential combinations might be questionable. It will be interesting to see what emerges as the basic looks. As for recruiting, time will tell but we seem to have one to go on: Doris Green-Beckham, the nation's top recruit, spent lots of time in the equipment room on his last visit, and Mizzou believes the uniforms were at least some factor in his decision to go there.

JEFF GORDON:

Thumbs down. College football is all about tradition. Young people may like the flashier look, but schools like Missouri rely heavily on boosters to pay the bills. And the boosters are drawn to tradition. This reminds me of when the NHL decided to go flashy with their sweaters. As it turned out, NHL fans are way more attracted to the traditional look, especially in the large, long-time markets.

NATE LATSCH:

Thumbs up. I don't like the white uniforms as much as the black and gold versions, but overall the uniforms are very sharp and well done. Without a doubt the new uniforms will help convince some recruiting targets to pick the Tigers. The uniforms might not make as much of a difference in the opinions of recruits as the switch to the Southeastern Conference will, but they will help because high school football players care about how they are going to look on the field.

KATHLEEN NELSON:

I like the fact that the Old Gold doesn't look so old anymore. The color is less muddy, a little more vibrant. But, you're asking the opinion of someone who is clad in gray, paint-stained sweat pants and a gray long-sleeved T-shirt, so what do I know about color or fashion? You'd like to think that young adults would base one of the most important decisions of their lives on something other than the color scheme of a uniform or the spit shine on the equipment in the weight room, but it just ain't so for a subset of the recruits that coaches feel make a difference. Maybe a cool uni nabs you a recruit or two each year, and maybe they make a difference in a game or two. But that's the difference between a top-tier bowl and another Christmas vacation in Shreveport.

STU DURANDO:

Seems to me they made about the right amount of changes although the basketball uniforms are pretty tame. I especially like the new helmets. I can't imagine any recruit would make a decision based on a uniform but I can envision the new style catching someone's eye enough that they become interested in Mizzou based on a forward-thinking image.

JOE STRAUSS:

Mizzou broke what didn't need fixing. I can understand the insecurity about the helmet logo, but overhauling what I considered a mostly cool look seems extreme. Of course, those who don't like the look are told they don't "get it" because the approach is tailored to impressionable teens. Amazing what institutions of higher learning come up with to justify greater revenue streams. Last time I checked, Alabama had one of the least hip uniforms in the nation. Somehow, it doesn't seem to have affected recruiting. If a program truly believes uniforms will make a difference in its recruiting, then its success is more superficial than most would care to admit. Truman gets a thumbs down on this one.