

Community Improvement District votes to approve Tiger Town street closure

By Emma Ross

June 12, 2012 | 11:03 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA —A waiver request for street closures was part of a package for approval presented by **Tiger Town organizers at the Community Improvement District meeting Tuesday evening.**

District board members voted to approve street closure requests for the block-party-style events on Eighth Street from Broadway to the north and Elm Street to the south. These street closure requests must still be approved by the City Council.

The plan stands, as of now, for only a specific area of Eighth Street to be designated for open containers of alcohol, as would be required by state law. The open container ordinance will go to the City Council for approval Monday.

The festival-type events will only take place before Southeastern Conference home games, beginning Sept. 8 against Georgia. Tiger Town organizers' tentative plan is to close off the designated area at 3 a.m. before home games and to reopen them when the games start. This differs from organizers' original plan, which also allowed for post-game festivities.

Eighth Street was selected for the events' location because it's equidistant to all parts of downtown, Tiger Town organizer Greg Steinhoff said.

Supervising editor is Ann Elise Taylor.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Average price of 4-year public university rises 15% in two years

NO MU Mention

By CHRISTINE ARMARIO/The Associated Press

June 12, 2012 | 9:07 p.m. CDT

The average tuition at a four-year public university climbed 15 percent from 2008 to 2010, fueled by state budget cuts for higher education and increases of 40 percent and more at universities in states like Georgia, Arizona and California.

The U.S. Department of Education's annual look at college affordability also found significant price increases at the nation's private universities, including at for-profit institutions, where the net price for some schools is now twice as high as Harvard.

At Full Sail University, a film and art school in central Florida, the average price of tuition, fees, books and other expenses totals \$43,990, even when grants and scholarships are factored in. The average net price for an incoming Harvard student: \$18,277, according to the department. Net price is cost of attendance minus grant and scholarship aid.

Education Secretary Arne Duncan said students need to be smart consumers and states needs to do their part by making higher education a priority in their budgets. Forty percent of states cut higher education spending last year, the most important factor in tuition increases.

"As a nation, we need more college graduates in order to stay competitive in the global economy," Duncan said. "But if the costs keep on rising, especially at a time when family incomes are hurting, college will become increasingly unaffordable for the middle class."

Pennsylvania State University had the highest in-state tuition for a four-year public university at \$15,250 during the 2010-11 school year. When the costs of room, board and other expenses are factored in, the total rises to \$19,816, the fourth highest net price nationwide.

Bill Mahon, a spokesman for the school, said a 19.6 percent cut in state funding last year, coupled with a decade of weak state support, "has left Penn State increasingly reliant on students and their families to fund most of the costs of their Penn State education."

Zach Zimbler, who graduated from Penn State University in the spring with a degree in information sciences, said his total tuition came out to about \$50,000 for four years. He now has loans totaling about \$25,000. He said many students don't realize how much debt they've amassed until it comes time to pay.

"The students themselves don't really know what they're getting into," he said.

Zimbler said he worked during school and feels confident about the value of the education he received, even though it came with a high price tag. He's working on starting his own software business.

The College Affordability and Transparency lists were first published last year to fulfill a reporting requirement passed into law in 2008. The lists track tuition and fees as well as the average net price at public, private and for-profit colleges and universities.

It's one of several recent initiatives by the Department of Education to increase student and parent awareness on the costs of higher education. Last week, presidents from 10 colleges and universities agreed to provide students information on costs, financial aid and monthly loan payments after graduation in an easy-to-understand form. President Barack Obama also issued a mandate to streamline the application process for those who want to enroll in income-based repayment plans, which set a cap on loan payments based on discretionary income.

Meanwhile, Republicans and Democrats in Congress are struggling against a July 1 deadline to avert a doubling of interest rates on new federal student loans for 7.4 million people.

The data released Tuesday shows increases for four-year, public institutions that are similar what has been observed over the last decade, though Duncan said costs have increased faster in recent years. Between 2001-02 and 2011-12, in-state tuition and fees at public, four-year colleges increased at an average rate of 5.6 percent each year, according to the College Board's 2011 report on trends in higher education pricing. That rate is higher than in previous decades: In the 1980s, tuition increased at about 4.5 percent each year, and in the 1990s at 3.2 percent.

"Obviously we're at a period of economic instability at the state level, so you'll see among public institutions the increases in tuition and fees are a lot of times a function of declines in state support," said Bryan Cook, director of the Center for Policy Analysis at the American Council on Education. "So we've not been surprised in seeing increases in tuition."

Certain states have been harder hit than others. Five of the 33 public universities with the highest net price, for example, are in Ohio. Six public universities in Georgia saw tuition increases that were higher than 40 percent. The University of California in Berkeley and Los Angeles also saw big price jumps.

The data released by the Education Department goes up until the 2010-11 school year, and in some states, tuition increased again last year.

Cook advised students to look at the data in context: Some schools with big rate increases, for example, still have tuition that is below the nationwide average.

"I think there is more comprehensive information that could be provided contextual information that could be provided for these lists if we really want to provide students and families with the most information to make a good decision about going to college," he said.

There were some bright spots in the data. Community colleges, Duncan noted, remain one of the most consistently affordable options for higher education: The average net price of a community college increased by less than 1 percent between 2007 and 2009. Tuition, room and board average \$8,085 at a public, two-year institution in 2010.

"While community colleges have mostly done their part, there is much more the rest of us can and should be doing," Duncan said. "Keeping college affordable is a shared responsibility."

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Pay gap for women physicians at medical schools, teaching hospitals

NO MU Mention

By LINDSEY TANNER/The Associated Press

June 12, 2012 | 8:58 p.m. CDT

CHICAGO — Women physician-scientists are paid much less than their male counterparts, researchers found, with a salary difference that over the course of a career could pay for a college education, a spacious house, or a retirement nest egg.

To get the fairest comparison, the study authors took into account work hours, academic titles, medical specialties, age and other factors that influence salaries. They included only doctors who were involved in research at U.S. medical schools and teaching hospitals, all at the same stage in their careers. And they still found men's average yearly salaries were at least \$12,000 higher than women's.

Over a 30-year career, that adds up to more than \$350,000.

The results are sobering and "disappointing. I think we have much work to do," said lead author Reshma Jagsi, a breast cancer radiation specialist and researcher at the University of Michigan.

Why the big disparity?

Two women who have been prominent in medical research say this: Men tend to be more aggressive at self-promoting and asking for pay raises than women.

"Male faculty members are willing to negotiate more aggressively. It may be social and cultural. It seems to be fairly deep-rooted," said JoAnn Manson, chief of preventive medicine at Brigham and Women's Hospital and a professor at Harvard Medical School.

Manson, who as a division chief helps make salary decisions, says men much more frequently than women ask her for salary increases and promotions.

Julie Gerberding, former head of the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, agrees.

Gerberding did infectious disease research at the University of California-San Francisco before joining the CDC and says early in her career she was bothered that relatively few women held high-paying leadership positions in academic medicine.

"There were some moments when I was angry, but that was motivating. I thought it was an intolerable situation and it just motivated me to work harder," said Gerberding, who left CDC in 2009 and now heads Merck & Co.'s vaccine unit.

She and Manson declined to say if they think they've been paid less than male counterparts.

While previous studies have found that female doctors are frequently paid less than male doctors, many observers have assumed that's often related to having children — working fewer hours, or choosing less time-consuming, lower-paying specialties to allow time for child-rearing.

The new study did find more women in less lucrative specialties, including pediatrics and family medicine, and more men in the highest-paying fields, including heart surgery and radiology. But it still found salary inequities in similar jobs even among women and men without parental responsibilities.

The findings are from a mailed 2009-10 survey of 800 doctors who had received prestigious federal research grants in 2000-03. The findings appear in Wednesday's Journal of the American Medical Association.

Women's yearly salaries averaged almost \$168,000, compared with \$200,400 for men — a difference of more than \$32,000. Taking into account academic rank, choice of medical specialties and other factors that could affect salary, the difference wound up being \$12,194.

Peter Ubel, the study's senior author and a Duke University professor, said there's no formula for pay increases; doctor-researchers don't automatically get a raise every time one of their studies is published. That makes the decision-making process more subjective, he said.

About equal numbers of men and women attend and graduate from medical school. But women make up a tiny portion of leadership positions at medical schools. And Jagsi said people in hiring positions may be biased, perhaps unconsciously, toward hiring men.

Ann Bonham, chief scientific officer at the American Association of Medical Colleges, a national group that represents U.S. medical schools and teaching hospitals, said medicine isn't the only field with gender differences in salaries. Medical schools are aware of the problem and are moving to ensure that decision-making on salaries "is a fair process and transparent. Nobody intends to be unfair in distributing resources," Bonham said.

Gerberding praised the study for raising awareness.

"Institutions need to take this information seriously and take a hard and closer look at their own salary parity issues," she said. Career advancement often depends on having a strong mentor and sponsor, so women and men in leadership positions at medical schools and teaching hospitals should make sure they're actively advocating for qualified women and suggesting them for promotions, Gerberding said.

AP Associated Press



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Farm bill divides Midwestern and Southern farmers

MU MENTION p. 3

WASHINGTON — For once, it's not Democrats battling Republicans. The five-year farm and food stamps bill now being debated in the Senate is a regional fight, pitting rice and peanut growers in the South against corn producers and soybean farmers in the Midwest.

The half-trillion-dollar bill setting farm policy into the future outlines dramatic changes in how farmers are protected from financial and natural disasters. It would end \$5 billion a year in direct payments to farmers whether or not they actually plant a crop and programs that reward farmers when prices fall below a targeted level.

Instead, the government would offer a new "shallow loss" program to aid farmers when revenues fall between 11 percent and 21 percent below five-year moving averages and would put greater emphasis on heavily subsidized crop insurance. Farmers' regular crop insurance would pay for losses above 21 percent.

The Congressional Budget Office estimates this new shallow loss program could save taxpayers some \$8.5 billion over the next five years compared with the current subsidy system.

As with all big changes, there are winners and losers. Southern rice and peanut growers see themselves as the losers. This regional divide is one of the two major obstacles to getting a farm bill through Congress before the current law expires at the end of September.

Nutrition programs, primarily food stamps, are the other hurdle. They make up about 80 percent of the cost in the \$100 billion-a-year bill. The Senate proposal would cut the food stamp program now serving about 46 million people by \$4 billion over the next decade — largely by targeting abuses. Some senators and the Republican-controlled House would like to see a far bigger cut, mainly by tightening eligibility for food stamps.

The entire bill, which also covers conservation and research programs, would reduce spending by \$23.6 billion over the coming decade.

Republican Sen. John Boozman, whose state of Arkansas is the nation's largest rice grower, said the Senate bill "will have a devastating impact on Southern agriculture." Republican Sen. Saxby Chambliss of Georgia, the national leader in peanut production, complained it "shoehorns all producers into a one-size-fits-all policy" that would force farmers to switch to crops that enjoy better coverage for losses.

The bill's two main sponsors, Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman Debbie Stabenow, D-Mich., and top Republican Pat Roberts of Kansas, defended their approach.

"People can always disagree with economists," Stabenow said on C-SPAN's "Newsmakers." "But I guess what I would say is what we have put in place ... it's fair for every commodity."

"This is a different year, this is a year we have to change," Roberts said in the same interview, adding that was made clear to all the commodity groups.

But rice and peanut farmers argue that the crop insurance and the new shallow loss or Agriculture Risk Coverage programs are better fitted to crops such as corn, where natural disasters such as floods and droughts can cause far greater fluctuations in yields. Many rice farmers, who irrigate their crops and have more consistent yields, don't have crop insurance to protect them from yield loss, but they do have to cope with large swings in prices and high production costs.

Linda Raun, who runs a 1,000-acre rice farm southwest of Houston and chairs the USA Rice Producers Group, said direct payments have been their only safety net in the past. Without price protection, banks won't lend them money, she said. "We've got to have a farm program that allows us to become bankable."

Without greater risk protection she said she will have to decrease production. Texas, unlike other rice-growing areas, does not have the climate and soil to switch to other crops, she added.

Raun said production costs amount to about \$1,000 an acre for rice. Because of a reliance on foreign export markets, prices can change rapidly. Currently prices for Southern rice are not that good, unlike the strong prices enjoyed by corn and soybean growers.

Testifying last month before the House Agriculture Committee, Armand Morris, a peanut producer in Georgia and chairman of the Southern Peanut Farmers Federation, said the debate "is not whether farmers will take significant cuts in farm programs; we know this will take place."

Rather, he said, it's about "whether we will have a farm bill that works for one or two regions of the country, and one or two crops, or a national farm bill that works for all regions of the country and all crops."

A recent study by the Food and Agriculture Policy Institute at the University of Missouri in Columbia does show that rice and peanut growers who are the main beneficiaries of direct payments would lose more than 60 percent of their government support over the next decade under the new system.

But the same report also found that the shallow loss program was generally equitable among the major crop groups.

Southern senators are seeking to negotiate changes to the bill that would allow a choice between the Senate's current crop insurance and revenue protection programs and some modified form of existing target price program that compensates farmers when prices dip below a certain level and which is preferred by the rice and peanut growers. The bill already has a separate revenue insurance program tailored to the needs of cotton farmers.

If that fails, House Agriculture Committee Chairman Frank Lucas, R-Okla., has made clear that the yet-unwritten House bill will include an alternative to meet the concerns of those Southern planters. The safety net, he said, "has to exist for all regions and all crops, and it has to be written with bad times in mind. These programs should not guarantee that the good times are the best, but rather that the bad times are manageable."

San Francisco Chronicle

Pink Slime No Brake to Beef Rally as Herd Contracts: Commodities

Elizabeth Campbell, ©2012 Bloomberg News

Tuesday, June 12, 2012

(For more commodity columns, click CMMKT.)

June 12 (Bloomberg) -- The U.S. cattle herd has shrunk to the smallest since three years before Ray Kroc opened his first McDonald's Corp. hamburger stand, reducing supply and raising prices even as domestic demand sinks to a two-decade low.

Beef output in the U.S., the biggest producer, will drop for a third year in 2013 after drought destroyed pastures, forcing farmers to cull herds to the smallest since 1952, government data show. Cattle futures traded in Chicago may rise to a record \$1.33 a pound by year-end, according to Ron Plain, a livestock economist at the University of Missouri at Columbia who has advised the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Rising prices are shoring up income for farmers contending with consumer concern over a type of treated meat dubbed "pink slime" and a case of mad cow disease in April. While U.S. beef consumption is contracting for a sixth year, exports last year were the highest ever. Global retail-meat costs gained 4.8 percent since February 2011 even as an overall food gauge tumbled 14 percent from a record, United Nations data show.

"The U.S. beef-cattle herd is at its lowest level in 50 or 60 years at the same time that global consumption of increased protein content and quality foods is rising," said Steve Shafer, the chief investment officer at Covenant Global Investors, an Oklahoma City-based hedge fund that manages \$320 million of assets. "Over the next three to five years, the supply-and-demand dynamics are tighter supplies with growing demand, which equals higher prices."

Smaller Herd

Cattle futures on the Chicago Mercantile Exchange rose 16 percent in the past year, second only to feeder cattle among 24 commodities tracked by the Standard & Poor's GSCI Spot gauge, which slumped 17 percent. Feeder cattle are animals being fattened prior to slaughter. The MSCI All-Country World Index of equities slid 9 percent in the past 12 months. Treasuries have returned 8.5 percent, a Bank of America Corp. index shows.

Story continues...



Hinkson Creek group ready to move ahead

By Jodie Jackson Jr.

Tuesday, June 12, 2012

Fourteen years after a federal lawsuit was filed against the Environmental Protection Agency to clean up Hinkson Creek and more than 200 other lakes and streams, a citizens committee could be just months away from making pollution control recommendations for the local creek.

For Hank Ottinger, that can't happen soon enough. Ottinger represents the local chapter of the Sierra Club on the committee, which met yesterday for the second time. The Sierra Club was one of two organizations that sued the EPA in 1998 to impose water quality standards for water bodies considered "impaired" under the Clean Water Act.

The Sierra Club loudly challenged EPA's decadelong delay to establish a pollution control plan — also called a total maximum daily load, or TMDL — for the Hinkson. The environmental group also was critical of the decision to allow an "adaptive management" process, a phased-in approach to bring the Hinkson into compliance with federal water quality standards.

"It strikes me as a delaying tactic," Ottinger said. "As we dither for the next months or years, the stream could deteriorate further."

However, Ottinger said the Sierra Club was willing to participate on the citizens committee "and see the project come to fruition."

"I don't know if it's the way to do it, but it's the way it's going to be done," Ottinger said. "We're playing the hand that we're dealt."

Under an agreement with the EPA and the Department of Natural Resources, the city of Columbia, Boone County and the University of Missouri will be allowed to pursue a more gradual reduction of stormwater runoff, rather than the 40 percent reduction initially sought by the EPA, while also testing to pinpoint the Hinkson's pollution sources and to restore aquatic life in the creek. The city, county and university together hold a permit that allows for stormwater runoff to discharge into the Hinkson and other waterways

The process known as "collaborative adaptive management" includes a science team, action team and stakeholder or citizens team. The citizens group will make water quality improvement recommendations based on data collected by the science team and suggestions made by the action team. Projects that might be ready for review by the end of August could include any

number of what stormwater managers call "best management practices," including rain gardens and underground stormwater retention cells.

The citizens group includes homeowners, developers and environmental advocates. EPA facilitator Shawn Grindstaff spent most of the first two meetings helping the group understand the process and how the group would function.

Committee member Jonathan Sessions, a member of the Columbia Board of Education, told Grindstaff the group was ready to begin reviewing information and options for improving the creek.

"I think we're all right with the process," he said.

Southern District Boone County Commissioner Karen Miller, also a member of the citizens committee, suggested the group take a field trip to see the creek before its next meeting in July.

"I hear it's just horrible, then I hear it's not all that bad," she said.

Sessions agreed a group field trip "would help put some things in perspective."