GUEST COMMENTARY: Deaton responds to National Research Council Report

By Brady J. Deaton, MU chancellor, Columbia
June 15, 2012 | 2:36 p.m. CDT

This is a landmark day for our nation's public research universities. As chancellor of one of the premier land-grant research institutions in the United States, I want to explain why this is so.

Today, the National Academies' National Research Council delivers its report: "Research Universities and the Future of America: Ten Breakthrough Actions Vital to Our Nation's Prosperity and Security." This report issues both a wake-up call about the alarming direction of higher education due to financial exigencies and a sound remedy to change course. Indeed, the council's report offers real hope for revitalizing public higher education's dynamic role in our society by offering a financial model of shared responsibility among citizens, business, government and philanthropic organizations.

In essence, the council's report calls for a new social contract that includes federal responsibility earmarked specifically for research and graduate education support; each state's commitment to increase support for undergraduate education; and greater investment from the private sector to promote innovation, technology, human capital and its support facilities. This is necessary to ensure America's economic strength, national security and quality of life and to avoid the nation's further decline in these same areas. We are fortunate in Missouri that our state's leaders have responded to our efforts to contain costs and do more with less by keeping our operating budget stable for the coming year.

The preamble to the Constitution of the United States declares that the role of government includes efforts to promote the general welfare of the citizenry. From the outset of this nation, we, as a people, have known with certainty and espoused with conviction that "education is America's ticket to the future" in its role of providing an educated citizenry and workforce. Equally vital to the nation's prosperity is the impact of breakthrough research at institutions of higher education. This fuels the innovation and creativity that, in turn, expand our
economy and improve all aspects of our lives. Moreover, in the late 1800s, this country's creation of the land-grant system of public higher education became a unique world model for increasing access to higher education and for using research findings to inform the decision making of citizens and leaders at the community and state levels.

Today, MU heralds the National Research Council's report. We state our full support for its broad concept, and we look forward to exploring the specific strategies laid out in this document. We remain committed to efficiency and effectiveness in all our operations and to a partnership with our state government and our colleagues in the University of Missouri System and other institutions across the state. MU accepts this call to arms from some of America’s most prominent thinkers and leaders and invites support from all those who share our vision for a greater university, state and nation.

*Brady J. Deaton is the chancellor at MU.*
MU biochemistry assistant professor Peter Cornish named Pew Scholar

By Skyler Still
June 15, 2012 | 7:45 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

COLUMBIA — Peter Cornish has always been interested in discovery and figuring out how things function.

These interests have led him to national recognition.

Cornish, a biochemistry assistant professor at MU, is one of the 22 individuals in the nation to be named a 2012 Pew Scholar in biomedical sciences. He is the first MU faculty member to receive the honor while working at the university.

“It is a big deal for me and a big deal for the university,” Cornish said. “It not only provides money for research but also notoriety.”

Pew Scholars are considered to be among the most innovative young researchers. According to the Pew Charitable Trusts website, the community includes Nobel Prize winners, MacArthur Fellows and Albert Lasker Basic Medical Research Award recipients.
Since 1985, the program has invited top research institutions to nominate one candidate each year. It received 134 eligible nominations from a pool of 179 institutions this year.

Winners receive $240,000 over four years to help them pursue their research without major restrictions. The program looks to back scientists early in their careers so they can take calculated risks to help advance the human health field.

Even though Cornish only started at MU in the spring of 2010, his talent, past work and future potential made him a great fit to be MU’s Pew Scholar nominee, said Gerald Hazelbauer, chairman of the Biochemistry Department.

Cornish is working with technology called Förster resonance energy transfer (FRET), which is relatively new and developing quite rapidly, Hazelbauer said. Single-molecule FRET gives scientists the ability to look at molecules on an individual basis.

By looking at molecules at a nanometer level, which is one-billionth of a meter, scientists can figure out each molecule’s job and understand their basic functions, Cornish said.

Specifically, Cornish is studying ribosomes, which are the molecules responsible for creating protein.

Viruses and other diseases have the ability to use ribosomes to spread, Cornish said. By figuring out how viruses influence the protein synthesis process, scientists hope to become able to stop the disruption and create medical treatments.

Because Cornish has a background in both biology and physics, it gives him the ability to bridge the two areas of expertise, Hazelbauer said.

“He understands enough about biology to know the interesting questions, and enough about physics to be able to apply the techniques and troubleshoot,” Hazelbauer said.

Cornish used a similar technique while in graduate school at Texas A&M University. There, he earned a doctorate in biochemistry in 2005. He did his postdoctoral work at the University of Illinois before coming to MU in 2010.

Supervising editor is Hannah Cushman.
Thoughts of death make only the religious more devout

By Stephanie Pappas

Thinking about death makes Christians and Muslims, but not atheists, more likely to believe in God, new research finds, suggesting that the old saying about "no atheists in foxholes" doesn't hold water.

Agnostics, however, do become more willing to believe in God when reminded of death. The only catch is that they're equally as likely to believe in Buddha or Allah as the Christian deity, even though all the agnostics in the study were American and thus more likely to be exposed to Christian beliefs.

The findings confirm that while religion can help people deal with death, we all manage our own existential fears of dying through our pre-existing worldview, the researchers report in an upcoming issue of the journal Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin.

"These studies offer an improved understanding of how and why religious individuals tend to believe so strongly in their own religion's gods yet deny the gods of competing religions," the researchers wrote.

Plenty of research has shown that religion, which frequently promises an everlasting afterlife, helps people cope with the fact that they will die someday. But this use of religion is not universal. One 2006 study found that thoughts of death increased belief in supernatural figures in general for religious people. That study did not separate atheists from agnostics, nor did it examine how specific religious beliefs might influence the sort of supernatural figures a person might believe in.

To find out, University of Missouri psychologist Kenneth Vail III and colleagues recruited 26 Christians, 28 atheists, 40 Muslims and 28 agnostics. The participants were American college students, except for the Muslims, who were Iranians going to school in Iran. Each participant was tasked with writing either a brief essay about how they felt about their own death or a religiously neutral topic, such as loneliness or how to cope when plans go awry.
After a brief verbal task to distract the participants from the true purpose of the study, they filled out questionnaires about their religious beliefs, including their faith in the Christian God or Jesus, Buddha and Allah.

Unsurprisingly, when Christians thought of death, they became firmer in their beliefs than those Christians who hadn't been reminded of their mortality. They also became less accepting of Allah and Buddha, suggesting a closer adherence to their own worldview. Likewise, Muslims who thought of death became more faithful to Allah and less accepting of Buddha or the Christian God.

Atheists, who reject religion, showed none of these responses to thoughts of death. In other words, the myth that atheists turn to God on the battlefield or in other times of peril didn't hold up, Vail and his colleagues wrote. Along with other research, their study suggests that "atheists do not rely on religion when confronted with the awareness of death," they said.

Agnostics believe that the truth about God is unknowable. As far back as the 17th century, Catholic philosopher Blaise Pascal argued that if you don't know whether to believe in God, you should go ahead and do so — just to be safe. Pascal's Wager, as it's known, seemed to play out for the agnostics Vail and his colleagues studied. When they thought about their own mortality, these agnostics became more likely to believe in any deity, whether the Christian version, Allah or Buddha. In other words, they put their money on all three.

The findings show how differently people manage their thoughts of death, Vail and his colleagues wrote. Future research might focus on spiritual types who believe in many paths to God, they said, or perhaps on non-theistic belief systems such as Confucianism or Taoism.
Kids With Autism Face Health Care Disparities, Study Finds

These children have less access to specialized care than kids with other illnesses, researchers say
-- Mary Elizabeth Dallas

FRIDAY, June 15 (HealthDay News) -- Although children with autism spectrum disorders need more health care services, they have less access to specialized care than children with other conditions, such as asthma or diabetes, according to a new study.

"Across the board, children with autism spectrum disorders used more health care services, including in-patient stays in the hospital, and required more medications," study co-author Nancy Cheak-Zamora, assistant professor of health sciences in the university's School of Health Professions, said in a university news release.

"Children's insurance companies paid more for services, and parents also paid more, with their out-of-pocket costs often exceeding a thousand dollars per year," she added.

Autism spectrum disorder is the umbrella term for a group of developmental disorders with similar features, ranging from Asperger's syndrome at the mild end to full-blown autism. In general, it is a complex disability that causes problems with social interaction and communication, and is often marked by obsessive and repetitive behaviors.

For their investigation, the researchers examined previous studies that calculated the total health care costs paid by the families of children with autism spectrum disorders. In analyzing the information, they found that children with autism, who are at risk for other conditions, such as seizures, sleep disturbances and gastrointestinal problems, paid more for the care they received than other kids with illnesses that required specialized care.

"Children with autism spectrum disorders need coordinated health care, better access to services and more affordable care," said Cheak-Zamora. "Insurance companies should develop policies that will cover the treatments children with autism spectrum disorders need."
The study authors concluded that children with autism spectrum disorders should have a "medical home," which is the term for coordinated team care led by a primary care physician.

"In general, having a medical home helps ensure you have quality health care. It examines how well your health care providers are giving you coordinated care in which the family is truly a partner," explained Cheak-Zamora. "We found that children with autism spectrum disorders have medical homes less often than children with other special health care needs. This is a problem because families without a medical home report experiencing more financial problems and difficulties accessing and utilizing needed medical services."
The Strange Reason Your Kid Is Bad at Math

by Jill Yaworski June 17, 2012, 07:00 am EDT

To see A's on your kid’s math tests, know this number: His weight. Your child’s body mass index (a measure of weight as compared to height) could be linked to his or her ability to crunch numbers at school, according to a new study published in Child Development.

Researchers tracked 6,250 kids from kindergarten through fifth grade. Children who were obese throughout the study scored lower on math tests compared to kids without weight problems. They also reported feeling lonelier, sadder, and more anxious than their peers who weren’t obese.

“Kids just want have fun and feel accepted,” says study author Sara Gable, associate professor of nutrition and exercise physiology at the University of Missouri. “But children with weight issues are part of a stigmatized group. This can lead to low self-esteem and poor social skills, which may affect a child’s performance in school.”

Helping your child memorize multiplication tables is only putting a Band-aid on the bigger problem, says Gable. “Parents need to be vigilant about children’s lifestyles,” Gable says. “You need to monitor their sedentary time and what they’re putting in their mouth.” But that doesn’t mean you get to pass the baton and watch as your kindergartener run laps while you sit on the sideline munching chips and slugging soda. You must show them how to live a healthy lifestyle, says Gable. (Not sure where to begin? Fire up the grill and cook up some of the healthiest and tastiest dishes of the summer.)

Don’t worry: You won’t have to hire a personal trainer for the tots or a chef to cook dinners. Just start small and have fun together, Gable suggests. As little as 15 minutes of physical activity increases levels of feelings like enthusiasm, pride, happiness, and excitement, found a recent study in the Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology. Go for a bike ride, run through the backyard sprinkler, or head to the pool. (Have a blast sweating with your family—but be smart about it. Avoid America’s Scariest Fitness Trends.)
Obese children struggle more in math lessons 'because they feel lonely'

By Claire Bates

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Children who grow up obese have more to contend with than a greater risk of health problems such as asthma and diabetes. A new study has found they will struggle more in the classroom as well.

Researchers from three U.S universities found youngsters who were overweight from the ages of three to nine performed worse on a maths test than their slim peers.

The findings add to a growing body of research that suggests obesity is associated with poorer academic performance and therefore long-term career prospects.

**Lead author Sara Gable from the University of Missouri, Columbia, said: 'Our study suggests that obesity in the early years of school, especially obesity that persists across the elementary grades, can harm children's social and emotional well-being and academic performance.'**

The team from the University of Missouri, Columbia, the University of California, Los Angeles, and the University of Vermont looked at a nationally representative sample of more than 6,250 children.

The children were followed from the time they started kindergarten (aged three) through to fifth grade (aged nine).

At five time points, parents provided information about their families, teachers reported on the children's interpersonal skills and emotional well-being, and children were weighed and measured; they also took academic tests.

When compared with children who were never obese, boys and girls whose obesity persisted from the start of the study performed worse on the math test in the first grade. This lower performance continued through fifth grade.
Girls who were persistently obese were also found to have fewer social skills. The researchers said the poor maths performance of obese boys and girls could be partly explained because they reported feeling sadder, lonelier and more anxious.

Obesity is a growing concern in all western countries. In 2010, 30 per cent of boys and girls aged two to 15 were classed as either overweight or obese in the UK.

It is estimated that the NHS spends £4.2billion every year treating patients for obesity-related illnesses such as heart disease and diabetes – as well as on costly weight-loss surgery.

These include gastric band operations which costs £6,000 per patient as well as gastric bypass surgery – which splits the stomach into compartments so patients feel full more quickly – at £10,000 a time.

The study was published in the journal Child Development.
Fair shot or freedom? Words define campaign 2012

June 16, 2012

By SHARON COHEN, Associated Press

If sometimes it seems like the two candidates for president are speaking different languages, the reason is simple:

They are.

President Barack Obama and Mitt Romney use distinct vocabularies. Each has a campaign glossary of sorts to define himself, criticize the other guy, highlight opposing economic philosophies.

Fair shot or economic freedom? The nation's welfare or class warfare? You're-on-your-own economics or the heavy hand of government?

The president has tried to cast himself as the champion of the middle class. He claims Romney wants to perpetuate failed economic policies that favor the rich and privileged business interests over everyday workers. Obama regularly denounces tax breaks for millionaires and billionaires and frequently talks about the importance of "playing by the rules."

Romney has portrayed himself as Mr. Turnaround, the hands-on guy whose 25 years in the private sector give him the ideal resume to revive an economy he contends has gone from bad to worse under the president. His speeches are filled with patriotic references to the Founding Fathers and regular mentions of "free enterprise" and "prosperity."

"In a lot of ways, it's the standard party line — Democrat, working-class rhetoric, Republican, business class," says Mitchell McKinney, professor of communication at the University of Missouri.

"Both are playing to the base. ... Obama has to address those disparities in the economy without seeming that he is anti-business, anti-capitalist. ... Romney wants to tout the making of money
and successful working of the capitalist system but not highlight in any way the downside. In that sense they both have fine lines they're trying to walk."

Both men have tripped on their own rhetoric.

There was Obama's recent retreat from his assertion that "the private sector is doing fine" and Romney's declaration that "corporations are people." In coming months, McKinney says, the candidates, surrogates and big-money political groups will repeat certain words and phrases "so America comes to accept their narrative as reality. Clearly, words do matter."

So which ones matter most? Some examples from the still-evolving economic glossary of Campaign '12:

ECONOMIC FREEDOM: Or, government get out of the way. Romney subscribes to a longstanding Republican philosophy that the less government, the better the chances for a flourishing economy. He reiterated his belief in unfettered markets and minimal regulation in a March speech at the University of Chicago. The school's economics department has long been regarded as friendly confines for such thinking. It was home to Milton Friedman, the influential economist and apostle of free-market theory. (Romney began his speech with a Friedman anecdote.)

In "The Freedom to Dream," Romney said "freedom" 29 times.

"When he talks about economic freedom and saving the country — the religious is entwined with the economic," says David Frank, a University of Oregon professor and expert on presidential rhetoric. "It's a very powerful message ... the government should not intervene in the free market, one ruled by individuals who are successful because of God's grace."

The message also echoes former President Ronald Reagan, who famously declared that government is the problem, not the solution.

COLLECTIVE AMNESIA: Obama's critique of what he says is a trait shared by Republicans who've championed laissez-faire policies but ignored the results. The president argues they've conveniently forgotten that inadequate regulation, an irresponsible financial sector and a free market that operated without "rules of the road" led the nation to the worst economic meltdown since the Great Depression.

The president's pitch: Remember the financial debacle of 2008, the "broken-down theories" that helped trigger it and don't forget Romney and other Republicans are offering more of the same.

FAIR SHOT: Also see fair share, fair play and fair. A central campaign theme for Obama. His belief that the government has a role in creating conditions for prosperity, that the growing income gap is hazardous to the nation and the recipe for a stable middle class is to give everyone a fair chance to succeed.
Obama used some form of "fair" 15 times in his speech last December in Osawatomie, Kan., reiterating his call for higher taxes for the rich and rejecting trickle-down economics as a dry spigot.

The prairie setting was ripe with personal and political symbolism: Obama's mother and grandparents were from Kansas (good chance to flash his humble roots credentials). Osawatomie also was where Teddy Roosevelt in 1910 unveiled his vision for a New Nationalism, calling for "practical equality of opportunity for all." Obama invoked the former president's name and pointedly noted Roosevelt was branded a radical and a socialist back then — labels that have a familiar ring to Obama today.

"He really wants to hit the equality of opportunity, the fairness argument that has traditionally worked very well for Democrats," says John Murphy, a University of Illinois associate professor specializing in presidential rhetoric. "Think way back to the New Deal, the Fair Deal, those were all slogans based on, 'Hey, everybody gets an equal shot.'"

Murphy also says the recent Wall Street protests — where anger over income disparity prompted the rallying cry, "We are the 99 percent!" — deserve credit for putting the issue on the radar. "The Occupy movement has given an opening to Obama to make the arguments that might not have been there," he says. "It helped set the agenda just like the Tea Party did in 2010."

OPPORTUNITY SOCIETY: A phrase with long Republican lineage now used by Romney to describe a society in which people and businesses succeed based on merit and free enterprise, not government doling out benefits, regardless of effort. Reducing the size of federal government is essential. Reagan spoke of an opportunity society and Newt Gingrich's Conservative Opportunity Society (founded in 1983) preached the importance of moving from a 'liberal welfare state' to one centered on opportunity.

ENTITLEMENT OR GOVERNMENT-CENTERED SOCIETY: See above. Romney's criticism of Obama policies, contending the president is transforming America so people rely more on government because the economy does less. Romney synonyms: "heavy hand of government" or "the invisible boot of government," which he claims stifles free enterprise, "one of the greatest forces of good this world has ever known."

YOU'RE-ON-YOUR-OWN ECONOMICS: Obama's words to describe how he says Republicans respond to Americans unable to fend for themselves. His shorter version: "Tough luck." He says that's the GOP's response to those who need help because they're poor, don't have health insurance or are jobless. Obama calls it a "cramped narrow conception" of liberty.

SOCIAL DARWINISM: The label some Democrats have attached to GOP House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan's fiscal austerity plan for a sweeping overhaul of Medicare, deep social service cuts and lower tax rates. Many Republicans, including Romney, have expressed support as a way to curb government spending. Many Democrats say this approach would squeeze the already struggling poor, forcing them to compete for fewer resources while the wealthy would thrive, a cruel economic survival of the fittest. Obama called the plan "thinly veiled" Social Darwinism.
CLASS WARFARE: A wide-ranging criticism by Romney and other Republicans of the Occupy Wall Street movement and Obama policies that highlight income inequity, notably the Buffett rule. The proposal is named after billionaire Warren Buffett and calls for everyone earning a $1 million a year or more to pay at least 30 percent of their income in taxes. Buffett himself has complained that he pays a lower tax rate than his secretary.

Romney claims Obama is trying to stoke envy by focusing on the income gap on the campaign trail. Early this year, Romney told a TV interviewer: "I think it's fine to talk about those things in quiet rooms and discussions about tax policy and the like."

Obama says asking the rich to sacrifice more to help in tough times is not class warfare, but advancing the nation's welfare.

FOOTNOTE: During the GOP primaries, the "class warfare" line was a verbal bludgeon for Republicans to bash one another. Rick Santorum and Gingrich both pilloried Romney with the phrase.

JOB CREATORS: A popular phrase, often appropriated by congressional Republicans (Romney also has used it) to lionize small business owners while opposing plans to raise taxes. At times, repeated with the unanimity of a Greek chorus. A term also criticized by Democrats and others, including Paul Krugman, Nobel Prize-winning economist and New York Times op-ed columnist. He recently wrote that a "right-wing political correctness" has rendered it impossible to discuss ideas that challenge "established order" so instead of the wealthy "we're supposed to call them 'job creators'" and talking about inequality is deemed "class warfare."

Last year, U.S. Sen. Barbara Boxer, a California Democrat, dismissed job creator as "so much bull." Comedian-satirist Jon Stewart mocked it, joking: "Republicans are no longer allowed to say that people are rich. You have to refer to them as job creator. You have to say that this chocolate cake is so moist and job creator."

Job creator, according to Frank, the Oregon professor, is a "linguistic shift that takes the onus off capitalism" and transforms it into a "force of good" — rather than laying off people, businesses are seen as providing opportunities and a paycheck.

While these words are shaping the debate, what isn't said on the campaign trail is equally revealing.

Case in point: Romney recently made several references to former President George W. Bush as Obama's "predecessor," avoiding the name of someone who was very unpopular when he left office. Romney also doesn't identify by name Bain Capital, the private equity company he headed, though he boasts of his business prowess while working there. The president, for his part, doesn't talk about the individual mandate in his health care reform bill.

"You want to avoid nouns that can be used as sound bites that can be turned into something potentially negative," says Kathleen Hall Jamieson, an expert on political communication at the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg Center. Not mentioning the mandate makes sense, she
says, because it's unpopular, as does Romney not identifying his company "because he doesn't want to be tied to everything Bain does." She points out during the GOP primaries, Romney's rivals accused Bain of predatory tactics and "vulture capitalism."

By fall, McKinney says, it'll become clearer what words and messages resonate with the public.

If voters "define our ailing economy as an election that needs a president who will protect those struggling against big business and uncaring economic forces, then perhaps it's advantage Obama," he says. If they "think that what we need most during this time of economic uncertainty is a president who understands global financial markets, investment forces and so forth, then perhaps it's advantage Romney. These two candidates are struggling to help voters interpret just what sort of economic savior we need in the White House. ... I think the verdict is still out."
Critics of Missouri’s term limits say political deadlock is the result

JASON HANCOCK

The Star's Jefferson City correspondent

Twenty years ago this fall, Missouri voters overwhelmingly approved term limits for members of the state legislature.

At the time, reformers complained that some lawmakers were becoming career politicians, prone to corruption and out of touch with constituents.

But now critics of term limits are pointing to what they contend are the unintended consequences of that vote: political gridlock, embarrassing legislative mistakes, and lawmakers turning into highly paid lobbyists to influence their wet-behind-the-ears colleagues.

"The legislature has become unable to do the job we need it to do," said David Valentine, a senior research analyst in the Institute of Public Policy at the University of Missouri.

Valentine, who directed the research division in the Missouri Senate for two decades, said the limits of eight years in each house deserve much of the blame for legislative stalemates and other problems that have gripped the General Assembly in recent years, including the session that just ended.

He believes the governing body has lost much of its institutional knowledge, and what's left is in the hands of legislative staff and lobbyists.

"We don't understand how truly complex government is," explained Valentine, who issued a study on term limits last year. "It takes a long time to learn. Missouri has a $24 billion budget, and yet our legislators have the same experience as they did in the 1920s."

The lack of experience plays out in numerous ways. One of the most significant is high-profile mistakes, such as in 2009 when lawmakers inadvertently banned plastic containers, such as Tupperware, on Missouri's waterways. The intent was actually to ban Styrofoam.
But perhaps just as important, Valentine contended, is that lawmakers no longer have the incentive to compromise.

"In an earlier era, legislators were more inclined to compromise because they had served with many of these people on a daily basis for years," he noted. "When you have that kind of long-term relationship, you really don't do yourself any favors by kicking people in the teeth repeatedly."

Philip Blumel, president of the advocacy group U.S. Term Limits, doesn't doubt that the General Assembly is more dysfunctional today than in previous years. But he argued that the culprit is not term limits.

"The reason why it's been more dysfunctional lately, not just in Missouri but everywhere, is that there are economic problems in the country that make decisions far more difficult," Blumel said. "Things are easy in boom times; they're tougher in tough times."

No one can deny, however, that institutional knowledge and experience have suffered thanks to term limits, said Senate Majority Leader Tom Dempsey, a St. Charles Republican running this fall for his final term. Term limits also can cause tension between members as they jockey for position and try to have an impact.

"You can't wait for tomorrow if you want to position yourself for a committee chairmanship, a leadership role or even another office. You're not going to be here tomorrow," Dempsey said. "So sometimes you have decisions that end up being based on politics more than policy."

Divisions between House and Senate Republicans caused a seven-week special legislative session last fall to end without any progress on its key issue -- a massive economic development bill.

In fact, only two pieces of legislation were ultimately successful: One that fixed a problem with a bill approved earlier in the year, and another that was eventually thrown out by the courts because of procedural problems over how it was passed.

More recently, a group of nine Republican senators temporarily blocked passage of the state's budget over concerns that it was not truly balanced and relied too heavily on one-time revenue. The debate over that budget turned especially personal, with term-limited Republican Sen. Jason Crowell repeatedly slamming GOP leadership, specifically Senate Appropriations Chairman Kurt Schaefer, who is running for his final term in the Senate this fall.

Dempsey, who took his fair share of barbs from Crowell during the budget debate, said term limits can be a factor in how relationships with colleagues are formed. However, he contends it had little to do with recent disagreements. Personality differences, coupled with redistricting, played a far bigger role, he said.
Rep. Tim Jones, a Eureka Republican who is expected to become House Speaker next year, said contrary to what critics of term limits believe, they could actually improve relations between the legislative chambers in the coming years.

"Many of those personalities will not be here next term," Jones said on the final day of the legislative session. "The ones who will be here are the ones I have the best relationships with."

Lt. Gov. Peter Kinder, a Republican who has been a vocal supporter of legislative term limits, also believes that critics lay too much blame on term limits for any perceived problems.

"Like any reform that is broad in its scope, there are good results and bad results," Kinder said. "We hate to see some of our finest lawmakers depart, but on balance I think it's had an incredibly positive impact on our state."

Many people who would have never gotten the opportunity before have been able to serve in the legislature, something that brings new ideas and new energy to the process, Kinder added.

Next year, term limits will have a dramatic impact on leadership in both the House and Senate. House Speaker Steve Tilley, Senate President Pro Tem Rob Mayer, and Senate Minority Leader Victor Callahan of Independence are all being forced out by term limits.

House Minority Leader Mike Talboy, a Kansas City Democrat, joined the group of former legislative leaders when he decided against running for a final term to instead take a job with Burns & McDonnell as the Kansas City engineering firm's first director of governmental affairs.

George Connor, head of the political science department at Missouri State University, said more and more lawmakers are seeing the legislature as a stepping stone to something more lucrative. They either leave early to run for another office, he said, or use their experience to find a job in the private sector.

"There is no long-term job security, so why should people finish out their terms when another opportunity comes along?" Connor said. "The only permanent folks in Jefferson City are staff and lobbyists, so I think there is an issue of power moving to unelected people because of term limits. There is now a greater reliance on the expertise of unelected people, like staffers and lobbyists."

While legislators come and go, "the bureaucrats are there. The lobbyists are there. The political consultants are there. The donors are there," Dempsey agreed. "The legislators are the ones who are passing through."

Bills that sought to lengthen term limits have passed both the House and Senate, just not in the same year. And this year, opponents such as Sen. Scott Rupp vowed to filibuster any change to the current law.

"I do not take the threat of filibustering legislation lightly, but when it comes to opposing changing the Constitution in a way that is overwhelmingly opposed by the people in order to
extend politicians' terms in office, I will exercise this prerogative if need be," said Rupp, a Wentzville Republican who is running for secretary of state.

Even though he believes term limits have had a negative impact on state government, Valentine said he would never "talk about pre-term limits as 'the good old days' because it certainly wasn't always so good. There were still problems."

Ultimately, even if term limits do contribute to gridlock, some would contend that's also a good thing, Connor noted.

"What did the Missouri Legislature accomplish this last session? Not very much," he said. "And the good people of Missouri may be perfectly happy with that. They've gotten what they've asked for. It is a less active central government."

One of the biggest impacts of term limits for Dempsey, he said, was just getting to be a legislator in the first place.

"Term limits in some ways were the reason I got to serve in the state legislature, and ultimately it will hasten the end of my career," he said. "And that's not such a bad thing."
America, Start Your Natural-Gas Engines
Replacing gasoline in our cars could be an energy game changer. Here's what we need to do to get from here to there.

By TOM FOWLER

America has a wealth of natural gas in the ground. So, how do we get it into our cars?

The recent deluge of low-cost shale gas is already changing the way the country runs. Electric utilities are turning to gas to power their turbines, and chemical companies that rely on the fuel are coming back to the U.S. after years of investing overseas.

But the holy grail is transportation.

Every day, we consume 70% of our oil getting from place to place—and produce more than 30% of our greenhouse gases along the way. If we could run our vehicles on natural gas, it could kill two birds with one stone: Not only is natural gas a lot cheaper than oil right now, but its emissions are much cleaner than gasoline or diesel.

"This abundance of natural gas is something we weren't expecting as a country, but it's here now, and it's a gift we should take advantage of," says Steven Mueller, chief executive of Houston-based natural-gas producer Southwestern Energy Co. "There's huge savings here and a way to help to environment."

Natural gas is already making big inroads in the commercial-truck market. Delivery companies, trash haulers and other firms that operate big fleets are switching to natural-gas vehicles to save on fuel costs. But the really big leap—and the much more daunting task—will be getting passenger cars running on natural gas.

Cost is a big part of the problem: Natural-gas cars are more expensive upfront, thousands of dollars more than regular models. That's a tough sell anytime, never mind in this economy.

Public refueling stations, meanwhile, are few and far between. And there's the question of consumer psychology: How do you convince drivers that it's wise or even safe to put natural gas in their cars?
The barriers are significant, but pursuing natural-gas transportation is still worth the effort, according to a paper by Christopher Knittel, a professor of energy and economics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

With the right policy incentives, he writes, natural-gas vehicles could "increase the nation's energy security, decrease the susceptibility of the U.S. economy to recessions caused by oil-price shocks, and reduce greenhouse-gas emissions and other pollutants."

Here's a closer look at some of the challenges and how they could be surmounted.

Reinventing the Car

The big issue with building natural-gas vehicles is the fuel tank. Gasoline and natural-gas engines are relatively similar. But natural gas must be stored under high pressure—so the tanks must be stronger, heavier and larger. And that drives up the price. The only natural-gas passenger car sold in the U.S., the Honda Civic GX, costs about $5,200 more than a comparable gasoline vehicle and $3,600 more than the gasoline/electric hybrid Civic.

In other parts of the world, governments have mandated a switch to natural-gas vehicles, regardless of the higher cost of vehicles. In Pakistan and Iran, for instance, the governments made the change because the countries lack sufficient gasoline-refining capacity. Now the two countries have about 2.7 million and 1.9 million natural-gas vehicles, respectively.

That kind of mandate is all but unthinkable in the U.S. But there are efforts afoot to work around the fuel-tank issues to bring down the cost. 3M Corp. MMM +0.66% said earlier this year it is joining with Chesapeake Energy Corp. CHK +4.25% to develop natural-gas fuel tanks that use plastic linings wrapped in carbon-composite materials. The tanks could be 10% to 20% lighter with 10% to 20% more capacity than current natural-gas tanks, the companies said.

Meanwhile, researchers at the University of Missouri have developed a smaller tank that allows natural gas to be stored at a much lower pressure by keeping it in a material essentially made out of corncobs turned into charcoal briquettes. Early tests of the tank on a natural-gas pickup truck have worked well, according to researchers.

Another approach to the problem is economies of scale: If more natural-gas vehicles were sold, it's likely that the costs would come down.

There aren't any large-scale efforts under way to ramp up sales volume of passenger cars. But some natural-gas exploration and production companies have agreed to replace thousands of their existing pickup trucks used in the field with vehicles running on compressed natural gas, a form of the fuel popular in smaller vehicles.

Following discussions with the American Natural Gas Association, an industry group, Chrysler Group LLC said this year it will build at least 2,000 heavy-duty Ram pickup trucks that run on both CNG and gasoline. General Motors Co. GM -0.28% said it would offer similar vehicles in its GMC Sierra and Silverado lines.
Proponents also think a big part of the upfront-cost problem is perception: People, they argue, don't realize how much natural gas can save them over the life of the vehicle. With a gallon of gasoline hovering around $4 in many parts of the country, the comparable amount of natural gas can cost about half as much at current prices.

Still, you may need to drive quite a while to make it pay off. Consider this analysis by Prof. Knittel of MIT: Assume a CNG-fueled car costs $5,500 more than its gasoline counterpart, and assume a $1.40-per-gallon price advantage for CNG. Given that, he says, it could take more than nine years before the car owner broke even.

That's hard for the average car buyer to swallow. "The average person discounts any fuel savings beyond three years," says Kathryn Clay, executive director of the Drive Natural Gas Initiative, a program funded by natural-gas producers and gas utilities.

Reinventing the Pump

Regardless of how big and bulky the fuel tank, if you can't find a CNG station in your neighborhood, you're not going anywhere. Of the 1,500 stations available in the U.S., only about half are accessible to the public; the rest are reserved for fleet vehicles. That's a tiny fraction of the 118,000 public gasoline stations spread coast to coast.

A number of companies are currently setting up new fueling stations. These are on a very limited scale and serve mostly fleet vehicles, but some stations are in prominent public places, and advocates hope they'll spark consumer interest in the vehicles. Apache Corp., APA +2.08% for instance, built a CNG refueling station at Houston's Bush Intercontinental Airport to service a small fleet of CNG parking shuttles that the City of Houston operates.

The big barrier to setting up stations on a broad scale is cost. The average cost for building a gasoline station and convenience store in the U.S. was about $2.3 million in 2010, according to data compiled by the National Association of Convenience Stores. Adding the compressor and storage tanks needed for a CNG station can drive up the price by as much as $500,000—assuming the station can even hook into a natural-gas distribution pipeline. That's a big investment when few people are filling up their tanks with natural gas.

CNG vehicle owners also have an in-home fueling option—an appliance called the Phill. About the size of a large upright vacuum cleaner, the Phill can be installed on the wall of a garage with access to a 240-volt, 15-amp electrical circuit and a natural-gas line. A flexible hose plugs into the car and fills it up over the course of about six hours.

So far, there hasn't been a lot of consumer interest, largely because of the steep price tag: about $4,000, not including installation charges. (Why the price disparity between the in-home gadget and the one used at filling stations? The Phill is significantly slower and can't handle multiple vehicles at once.)

Ms. Clay, of the Drive Natural Gas Initiative, says her group has surveyed some 40 companies to see if they'd be interested in developing a lower-cost in-home system. About a dozen expressed...
interest. "It we can get the units down to $1,000 to $1,500 and reliability over four to five years, it would probably be a game changer for the consumer market," Ms. Clay says.

Pietro Bersani, chief financial officer of Fuel Systems Solutions Inc., manufacturer of the Phill, says the company has been able to drive down the cost of the units by about 30% in recent years, but it will take more orders to help prices fall further.

That's why the company will look to launch more programs like the one it just started with utility Atlanta Gas Light Co.: Natural-gas-vehicle owners can have a Phill installed in their garage free by agreeing to a five-year lease at $60 per month.

Reinventing the Fuel

Some in the industry are tackling the natural-gas transportation challenge another way—by turning natural gas into a fuel that could be used in cars with conventional engines and pumped at regular filling stations. The trouble, once again, is cost. The technology to turn natural gas into a low-sulfur diesel fuel was developed long ago in Nazi Germany, but it continues to be an expensive process that has limited its success.

Last year, Royal Dutch Shell RDSA +2.33% PLC opened its massive Pearl Gas-to-Liquids project in Qatar. The nation has substantial natural-gas resources—much more than its utilities need—so the government wanted to find a use for the excess fuel. The project now produces enough diesel from natural gas per day to fuel 160,000 cars as well as additives for jet fuel and feedstocks for a wide range of other products. But the project wasn't cheap, at $18 billion.

Shell is considering a similar plant in Louisiana, where it hopes to draw upon the abundance of U.S. natural gas and take advantage of the full range of other Shell businesses in the region that might benefit from the plant's output. That project could cost up to $10 billion, but the company hopes lessons learned from building Pearl will help keep those costs down.

Dallas-based chemical firm Celanese Corp. CE +4.35% has started to produce fuel-grade ethanol as a substitute for the corn-based ethanol from a plant in Clear Lake, Texas. But the company doesn't expect commercial-scale production in the near future.

In Silicon Valley, Siluria Technologies Inc. has figured out how to turn natural gas into ethylene, a feedstock that can be used to make a wide range of fuels and other products. The technique involves a genetically engineered virus that coats itself with a metal that serves as a catalyst.

Siluria President Alex Tkachenko says it remains a laboratory-scale process for now, however, and won't be commercial anytime soon.

Reinventing the Driver

Beyond the chemical, mechanical and economic challenges of getting natural gas into the vehicle fleet, there are psychological barriers. The average person doesn't think about natural gas when thinking of alternative vehicles, says Mike Omotoso, senior manager for LMC Automotive U.S.,
a research firm. "They might think of diesels, but they mainly think of gas-electric hybrids or plug-in electrics. They just aren't aware of natural gas."

Much of how the public will react is unknown. Will there be safety fears? Will people be willing to use the same fuel that heats their houses to run their cars? There's no wide-scale effort to answer those questions.

The arguments that will win over buyers aren't clear either. Honda used the cleaner-emissions pitch when its Civic GX came on the U.S. market in 1998, says Brad Johnson, corporate fleet director with Pacific Honda in San Diego. Now, he says, buyers seem more interested in saving at the pump and using a fuel produced in the U.S. Honda is also promoting the fact that CNG vehicles can drive in high-occupancy-vehicle lanes on California freeways.

Even though consumers are slow to adopt natural-gas passenger vehicles, at least a few gas retailers are optimistic that if they build it, drivers will come.

Love's Travel Stops & Country Stores, of Oklahoma City, plans to open 10 retail outlets with CNG pumps this summer, thanks to a partnership with Chesapeake Energy.

And Kwik Trip Inc., an operator of gas stations and convenience stores, opened its first CNG station aimed at passenger-car drivers in La Crosse, Wis., this spring, with plans for several more.

"It's attractive to customers because it's a domestic product, there's a steady supply, and the price is right," says John McHugh, Kwik Trip's communications manager. "If we can offer the consumer a value, we know people will jump on the bandwagon."
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Construction on MU's Hospital Drive will cause road closures

By Faith Miller
June 15, 2012 | 1:16 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Hospital Drive will be closed starting Friday as phase II of the road's realignment project begins.

The construction will stretch from the emergency department parking lot to the west of the ambulance exit. The area will be closed until July 12, a news release from MU said. Visitors can enter the emergency department parking lot via Tiger Avenue.

The section of Hospital Drive between the Patient and Visitor Parking Garage and Parking Structure No. 7 also will be closed until July 12. Visitors can enter the Patient and Visitor Parking Garage via Monk Drive. The exit on the north side of Parking Structure No. 7 will be closed, the release said.

Supervising editor is Jake Kreinberg.
MU Health System gets $13.3 million grant

Goal is to use technology to improve care, reduce costs for Medicare, Medicaid patients.

By Jodie Jackson Jr.

The University of Missouri Health System has been awarded a $13.3 million grant aimed at improving care for the some 10,000 Medicare and Medicaid patients who get primary health care through MU's system.

The grant, announced yesterday by Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, was one of 81 awards made nationwide. Three other health systems in Missouri or with ties to the state were awarded a combined $25.3 million.

The grants, the second batch of Health Care Innovation Awards, were made under provisions of the Affordable Care Act.

Hal Williamson, vice chancellor for the MU Health System, said the money will support a program designed to use health care technology, namely electronic medical records, to achieve better health care and lower health care costs. He said the program "has the potential to be a model for the nation."

The majority of the costs associated with the three-year grant will be for personnel, said Jerry Parker, associate dean for research at the MU School of Medicine and co-director of the MU Institute for Clinical and Translational Science.

Project LIGHT — Levering Information Technology to Guide High-Tech, High-Touch Care — will result in 18 people hired as health care coordinators and three new employees as health care information analysts. The grant also will fund two administrative positions for the project.

The primary objective of the project is to extract information from patients' electronic medical records to determine not only the ongoing and preventative care needed for individuals but also for entire patient populations at MU primary health clinics.

"That's the really innovative part of this," Parker said.
Even without visiting a doctor's office, Medicare and Medicaid patients will be able to know what preventative screenings they need. The project will focus heavily on patients who might not get regular check-ups and doctor's visits.

"This wouldn't replace the office visit, obviously," Parker said, but the new technology could lead to "more care and better preventative care."

Parker and myriad other health care professionals and researchers point to preventative care as one of the best ways to lower and control health care costs. Parker said that one important aspect of the three-year grant project will be comparing the cost of health care for the whole population of the MU system's Medicare and Medicaid patients at the start and at the end of the project.

"Hopefully, we'll find that by using this technology and delivering better, more proactive preventative health services, that we will have avoided some of the costs that otherwise would have been there," Parker said.

But the foremost objective, he said, is "better health for patients by virtue of doing the preventative care."

The technology used for the LIGHT project will get detailed information from electronic medical records that couldn't have been obtained with traditional paper records, he said.

"This is providing a new level of information that hasn't been readily available in most settings," Parker added. He said the same information will be available to patients "in a more user friendly way" through a secure health portal.

The health care coordinators will contact patients about recommended health screenings, and the program can send reminders to patients or provide patients with alerts about health risk factors.

HHS has now made awards to 107 projects that could save the health care system an estimated $1.9 billion over the next three years.

Parker said the pending Supreme Court decision on the constitutionality of portions or all of the Affordable Care Act won't affect the grant award.

"Regardless of how that Supreme Court decision plays out," Parker said, "we'll still find ourselves as a nation needing to find out how to provide good health care for our patients at a reasonable cost."

Reach Jodie Jackson Jr. at 573-815-1713 or e-mail jjackson@columbiatribune.com.