Nixon releases withholdings for higher education

By Rudi Keller
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JEFFERSON CITY— Gov. Jay Nixon on Monday released $8.5 million to state colleges and universities as revenue reports show continued strong growth in tax receipts.

At a news conference in his Capitol office, Nixon said he was releasing the money, withheld at the beginning of the fiscal year as a hedge against a drop in expected revenue. The state economy is rebounding, with 40,000 more people employed than a year ago, Nixon said.

“Today’s general revenue report reflects these positive trends,” he said. “This allows us to provide funds for higher education and children in need.”

Nixon also released $480,000 withheld from foster care programs.

The release will mean about $4 million in additional state aid to the University of Missouri, which will now receive $386 million of the $398 million allocated by lawmakers last year. The remaining funds represent the annual standard withholding, which has not been released.

Decisions about releasing that money, and other money withheld to balance the budget, will be made as the state moves through the second half of the fiscal year, Nixon said.

According to figures released Monday, state general revenues grew at a 9.5 percent pace during the first seven months of the fiscal year, including a growth rate of 18.4 percent in January. Revenue from all major categories of taxation – personal and corporate income taxes and sales taxes – are growing, according to the report.

Income tax receipts have grown by 6.1 percent and sales tax receipts have grown by 2.4 percent this year. “While the revenue numbers are certainly good this month, we will watch to make sure we have good numbers and make those decisions as we move forward,” Nixon said.
Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Kurt Schaefer, R-Columbia, said he was pleased with Nixon's decision and said the governor should release all funds withheld from state programs. The revenue figures support it.

“He needs to release those withholdings,” Schaefer said.
Jefferson City • Gov. Jay Nixon announced today that he is releasing $8.5 million in higher education that he previously withheld, boosting funding for Missouri colleges and universities to nearly the full level state lawmakers budgeted last year.

Nixon cited higher-than-anticipated state revenue collections in announcing his decision. Missouri’s general revenue report for January, which came out today, shows collections up 9.5 percent over the same month last year.

“Today’s general revenue report reflects these positive trends and allows us to make this additional funding available for higher education institutions and other programs,” Nixon said.

The money made available for higher education includes $1.3 million split over Missouri’s community colleges and $7.1 million for four-year institutions, more than half of which will go to the University of Missouri.

It does not include $300,000 that Nixon restricted from a $3 million program equity proposal.

Nixon also released funding for three programs for foster care and needy children, as well as funding for the Missouri State Historical Society.

Also today: Nixon signed three executive orders to reorganize some government agencies.
A Missouri education committee estimated Monday it would take about $388 million more to fully fund a proposed formula for distributing state aid to colleges and universities.

The Joint Committee on Education is working to develop a higher education funding formula that is similar to what exists for public school districts. Missouri's current approach has been to distribute money based largely upon how much the college or university has received in past years and what state government has available.

Officials released an analysis Monday calculating how the proposed formula would affect individual schools. The committee is accepting comments until Feb. 11 and plans to release a final report Feb. 15. State law gives the committee until the end of this year to develop a funding model.

Under the most recent draft, the funding formula would call for an increase in state money for all but one school. For example, the current year's state budget calls for the four-campus University of Missouri system to receive $398 million, which is $166 million less than what the target would be in the proposed formula. On the other hand, Lincoln University in Jefferson City now is getting about $17.5 million, which is $265,000 more than what the formula's target would be.

In addition, the committee's proposal calls for basing 10 percent of the state's funding upon whether each institution meets performance goals.

Sen. David Pearce, the chairman of the joint committee, said Missouri should hold colleges and universities accountable and reward them when they do well.

He said higher education has been underfunded in Missouri and that making it up likely will not happen immediately. Still, he said it is important to have funding targets.
"It will never happen if we don't start working toward it," said Pearce, R-Warrensburg.

Last year, the Coordinating Board for Higher Education recommended Missouri provide a $25.5 million pool of money for performance-based funding in the 2014 budget year that begins July 1. Each institution would get as much as a 3 percent funding increase if it achieves all of its performance measurements, with a 0.6 percent reduction in that funding hike for each goal an institution fails to meet.

Democratic Gov. Jay Nixon is recommending a $34 million boost for higher education. The additional funding would be based upon meeting performance measures and means some colleges could get as much as a 5.4 percent increase while others could get a 2.2 percent increase. Nixon defended his approach Wednesday.

"I think that the cooperative, collaborative method that we've been able to put together over the last two years will get more impact for students, will be embraced and I think is the right policy," he said.
JEFFERSON CITY — House Hearing Room 2 was packed at the Capitol on Monday morning when state officials and members of the Joint Committee on Education gathered for the release of a new draft model for funding higher education based on performance.

The new model, intended to be similar to the formula used to fund public school districts, estimates it would take an additional $388 million in state appropriations to meet desirable targets.

The draft plan proposes that 10 percent of total state funding for higher education be based solely on a school’s performance — primarily the number of student credit hours completed — and includes estimated operational costs for Missouri colleges and universities. The estimates are based on a simulation created by looking at schools in 10 states with per-capita personal income levels closest to Missouri’s, according to the new proposal.

The numbers show that nearly all of the state's higher education institutions need much more state support than they are receiving now. The University of Missouri System, the simulation shows, could use an additional $166 million in state appropriations.

“We rolled out the formula by which state aid can be distributed to the schools,” committee vice chair and state Rep. Mike Lair, R-Chillicothe, said. “That’s all this is.”

Comments on the draft plan will be accepted until Feb. 11 and can be submitted by email to the committee’s executive director, Stacey Preis, at stacey.preis@senate.mo.gov.

“They’ve got another week for people to say, ‘Wait a minute, we don’t think that was fair,’ or ‘Wow, what a great job you did,’” Lair said. “But guess what? We won’t hear any of that. We will hear, ‘What the hell did you do to my school?’”
The formula breaks down targeted core operational costs for each school into six categories — instruction, research, public service, academic support, student services and institutional support — all of which are combined to create a grand total for each school. All four campuses in the UM System were lumped together.

The simulation created as part of the draft listed the university system target operational costs as:

- $1.34 billion for instruction.
- $59.9 million for research. (Research spending was not based on comparative data from peer institutions.)
- $50 million for public service.
- $255.5 million for academic support.
- $70.6 million for student services.
- $200.8 million for institutional support.

The total simulated operational costs for the UM System were $1.97 billion per year. Operational costs as defined did not include expenses related to residence halls, bookstores, hospital services and other revenue-generating operations, the committee’s report said.

If the target for state appropriations is 28.61 percent of total costs, the state appropriation would need to be $564.3 million, the committee’s analysis showed. In fiscal 2013, the state budgeted $398 million for the UM System. That means it fell 30 percent short of the committee model’s target.

Statewide, the simulation found that the target for total state appropriations to Missouri’s public colleges and universities should be $1.31 billion. By comparison, the fiscal 2013 appropriation was $850.7 million.

The draft funding model unveiled Monday was a revised version of another that was released Dec. 10. Over the past several weeks, the committee has held public hearings across the state and offered two written comment periods to get input.

UM System spokeswoman Jennifer Hollingshead said Monday afternoon that university administrators were reviewing the latest version of the funding strategy.

Preis said that she, along with House Budget Director Mike Price and Senate Appropriations Analyst Trevor Foley, has been invited to meet with the Council on Public Higher Education to discuss the proposal Wednesday.
"They're free to comment on whatever they want to," she said.

HB 1731, passed last year, assigned the joint committee the task of coming up with a "comprehensive funding formula" for higher education by Dec. 31. That plan needs to be implemented by July 1, 2014, according to the bill.

Also, Gov. Jay Nixon announced Monday that another $8.4 million will be allocated to higher education for fiscal 2013. A total of about $3.98 million will go to the UM System. The additional money is available because general revenue for the state is ahead of budget projections.

Hollingshead said the UM System will be looking at student financial aid and other "strategic initiatives" as possible places to spend the new money.

*Supervising editor is Scott Swafford.*
Ex-Army Officer Facing Mizzou Protests Heads To Campus

COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) - The retired Army psychologist whose job candidacy is drawing protests at the University of Missouri is scheduled for a public interview on the Columbia campus.

Former Col. Larry James is dean of professional psychology at Wright State University in Ohio. He's one of two finalists for a top administrative job in the university's College of Education.

The interview was scheduled for 3 p.m. at the Reynolds Alumni Center.

Human rights groups have accused James of complicity in abuse of Guantanamo Bay prisoners while leading a team of psychologists at the U.S. detention center in Cuba in 2003 and again in 2007 and 2008.

James and his supporters note that despite several complaints, he has not been found culpable by any licensing board or in a court of law.
Students and Columbia residents protest possible MU hire of controversial military psychologist Larry James

About 30 students and Columbia residents marched from the Islamic Center of Central Missouri to Hill Hall on Friday to protest the possible hiring of retired military psychologist Dr. Larry C. James in connection to controversial and allegedly abusive interrogation methods at U.S. detention centers.

James worked for the U.S. military at the Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib detention centers, in Cuba and Iraq, respectively. He is one of two finalist candidates to fill the position of division executive director with the MU College of Education. Dr. Matthew Burns, a researcher with the University of Minnesota, is the other candidate being considered.

Daniel Clay, the dean of the College of Education, said the search committee was aware of the allegations and will continue to interview James in the hiring process. The information provided by the individuals who came forward is appreciated and the search will continue to be open and transparent, he said. In a statement at a press conference Friday, Clay said the decision will be made in early March. James will speak and answer questions from faculty and the public at an open forum at 3 p.m. Tuesday in the Reynolds Alumni Center.

Years of service

James served as chief psychologist at Guantanamo Bay in 2003 and director of the Joint Interrogation and Debriefing Center in 2004. From 2007 to 2008, James headed the Guantanamo Behavioral Science Consultation Team, a group of mental health professionals whose job it was to advise on and participate in the interrogations.

In 2008, James published a memoir titled "Fixing Hell: An Army Psychologist Confronts Abu Ghraib." In his book, James said he was sent by the Army “to clean up the abuses” at Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib.

James currently serves as the Dean of the School of Professional Psychology at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio, a position he's held for five years. He was awarded a Bronze Star and the Defense Superior Service Medal during his 22-year service in the military.

So far, James has not been sanctioned for any professional or ethical misconduct by any state or court of appeals court, or any licensing board, Clay said at the press conference.

Allegations and controversy

Harvard Law School's International Human Rights Clinic filed a complained with the State Board of Psychology of Ohio on July 7, 2010, that detailed allegations of misconduct and violations during
James's time at Guantanamo Bay. The complainants alleged he breached professional ethics by violating psychologists' duties to do no harm, to protect confidential information and to obtain informed consent, according to the complaint.

James was accused of playing an "integral role in the system of abusive interrogation and detention used to exploit prisoners' mental and physical vulnerabilities, maximize their feelings of disorientation and helplessness, and render them dependent upon their interrogators." These detainees included minors in James's custody and care, according to the complaint.

The complaint reads that, "If through that hearing this Board finds that Dr. James engaged in any of the acts of misconduct alleged herein, we ask this Board to revoke permanently his license to practice psychology in the state of Ohio."

In January 2011, the board announced that it was "unable to proceed to formal action in this matter," without explaining the decision. The complainants filed a writ of mandamus in the Franklin County, Ohio, Court of Common Pleas on April 13, 2011. They argued that the board failed in its duty to investigate and asked the court to compel the board to investigate the complaint or provide reasons for the dismissal.

James additionally holds a license to practice psychology in Louisiana, where Toledo psychologist Dr. Trudy Bond also took legal action against James on Feb. 29, 2008. Bond filed a complaint against James before the Louisiana State Board of Examiners of Psychologists, but the board decided not to investigate. Bond filed a petition for judicial review in the 19th Judicial District Court for the Parish of East Baton Rouge, but the court sided with the board. She appealed the case, but the Louisiana Court of Appeal reaffirmed the district court's decision.

In September of 2012, Bond and Dr. Steven Reisner, a psychology-ethics advisor for Physicians for Human Rights, sent an open letter to the American Psychological Association president, asking for a review of the organization's failure to investigate James.

The hiring process continues

Dean of the College of Education Daniel Clay made a statement at a press conference at 1:45 p.m. Friday, before the protest began. Clay said the search committee was aware of the allegations against James and investigated those allegations thoroughly.

"This is not a controversy we invited, obviously" Clay said. "... I felt strongly that in the interest of fairness and transparency that, um, you know, we can't discriminate against an individual based on unfounded allegations... as much as, uh, the thoughts of this turned my stomach and may turn yours, um, the reality is that he's not been, uh, indicted or found guilty of any ethics or, uh, legal or, uh, licensing board violations through this process."

Clay said the position of division executive director requires the administrative oversight of a very large budget faculty and professional staff and an academic program across three diverse departments. In his current position at Wright State University, James has demonstrated the ability to manage these kinds of things, he said.

Clay said free expression is at the core of MU's values, that he will review any information the group would provide and would make sure the search committee also receives the information.

The search has been and will continue to be transparent, he said.
"I have confidence in the work of the search committee as they continue to move forward with this process," he said. "All of us at the college value and respect the opinions of our faculty, staff and students, as well as the members of our community who have come forward today."

At the press conference, Clay said that James is the last candidate to be interviewed in a two-and-a-half day process. Burns completed his interview Friday.

The hiring decision will be made at the end of February or early March, Clay said. The division executive director search committee will interview James next week on campus.

Shortly after the press conference, the protest group, led by Mid-Missouri Fellowship of Reconciliation Coordinator Jeff Stack, met outside the Islamic Center of Central Missouri and marched to Hill Hall, where the MU School of Education is housed, to make speeches and hand in a petition to Chancellor Brady Deaton.

Protesters in Jesse Hall

The protest began with a moment of silence.

"Let's begin with a silence for our brothers and sisters who've been victimized," Stack said. "This decision is obscene to us as people of good will in our society. We are standing with the people who have been oppressed. We are not standing with the torturers."

Stack organized the march after he first heard of James's possible hiring from a friend, he said. He then contacted Barbara Peterson, director of strategic communications for the College of Education. Peterson suggested he research more about James and come to his own collusion, Stack said.

"I spent hours researching," he said. "The more and more I looked into him, I thought 'Why would they want to create this PR blunder? Why is the college drawing attention away from all the good things they do?'' Having James as the center of focus now creates unnecessary shame for the university, Stack said.

"He (James) is not someone with a sound moral compass," Stack said. "He has shown no remorse for what he's done. We are offended that he is being considered as a candidate. We don't think this is appropriate."

MU graduate student Nabihah Maqbool marched with the protestors. The reputation of the university is at stake with James's possible hiring, Maqbool said.

"This university is important to me," Maqbool said. "This university shouldn't be condoning this action … I don't want my university to be smirched by this."

Students from other Missouri schools attended the protest. Hasan Ali came from Westminster College in Fulton, Mo. to join.

"This is just like a thief," Ali said. "A thief will never admit he stole something. As a school that pushes for freedom and democracy, I don't think they should hire someone who has the potential to be against certain groups of people."

Ali, who is from Iraq, had a family connection to the incidents in Abu Ghraib, he said.
"Two of my cousins were killed in that prison," Ali said. "They were taken and then later we got a letter saying they were killed."

In the span of one hour, the protestors collected roughly 70 signatures for their petition not to hire James, Stack said.

Outside Hill Hall, Stack and other protesters spoke to the crowd. Stack urged people to contact university officials with complaints for the hiring of James.

"Make your voice heard because our case here is really, really sound and needs to be honored," Stack said. "Human life should be honored and respected."

Dean Clay also met the protesters outside of the building and spoke to the crowd. The concerns of the protesters and the community are important sources of information for the search committee, Clay said.

"I asked my secretary to take me out of a meeting so I could come here and spend a couple minutes with you to talk with you about your concerns, to hear from you directly and to answer questions that you might have," Clay said.

Community members should do research and look at all the evidence about James and form conclusions for themselves, instead of reading editorials or opinion pieces about him, Clay said.

"We felt as a committee, and I felt strongly as the dean, that we have to have the same level of respect and responsibility and transparency and fairness in this process for Dr. James and give him the opportunity firsthand to respond to these concerns, and to not make that decision for him and to not make that decision for you," Clay said.

Following Clay's statement, the protesters entered Jesse Hall to speak with Deaton and hand in the petition. Deaton was not present at the protest but Assistant to the Chancellor Ann McGruder met and spoke to the group. McGruder accepted the petition and told the group she would relay the information and petition to Chancellor Deaton.

The protesters dispersed after agreeing to meet at Tuesday's open forum at 3 p.m. where James will answer questions from MU faculty and the public.

The tip of the iceberg

Stack organized Friday's protest in a few days, and anticipates that the resistance will grow as more and more people become aware of the situation, he said.

"This is a very fast response," Stack said. "This is the tip of an iceberg."

Mid-Missouri Peaceworks Director Mark Heim said that he hopes the protest can gather broader opposition to the potential hiring of James.

"This is a ridiculous hire for our university to be considering and it's time for us to wake up," he said. "People who were involved in the kinds of atrocities that we saw at Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib and at other sites around the world the various so-called black sites ... these people should be held accountable. They certainly should not be rewarded with academic positions at prestigious universities."
That's out of line and it needs to be stopped ... I think once our community and once our state knows more about this Larry James, there will be many many more people joining our cause and that's very important.

Stack said the College of Education has been very transparent with the issue, and the protesters plan on maintaining transparency with their actions as well.

"We want to give (James) the same kind of respect that we would want," Stack said. "Mr. James is my brother, all those people in (Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo) are my brothers. We are one human family."
Study by MU professor Dan Geary shows importance of grade school math skills

MU Curator’s psychology professor David Geary published a study Jan. 30 about how certain mathematical skills learned before or during the first grade can affect how well people might perform certain jobs and how much money they make.

“A substantial number of adults have not mastered the mathematics expected of an eighth grader (22 percent in the U.S.),” according to the study.

The study found that early number system knowledge, or the conceptualization of numbers as physical objects, is important for students to learn early in elementary school or possibly even before.

“It’s important to understand that there is early number (system) knowledge,” said Geary. “If you don’t have it, learning of employment relevant skills is slowed down.”

The analysis is based on 180 Columbia elementary school students who participated from the first grade through the eighth grade, according to the study. The student participants covered many variables including socioeconomic background, learning capabilities and gender.

Geary said he will continue to follow the students until they have graduated high school as long as the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development continues to fund the research.

Geary used several tests to determine which skills were important for employability, using number lines and dice to show how well students could conceptualize the value of numbers. The study showed that a seventh grader’s score on the functional numeracy measure was significantly correlated with their beginning of first grade counting competence.

“Groups of skills did predict test performance,” Geary said. “Decomposing numerals into different sets seemed to be important early on.”

In the seventh grade, the students took a test that was similar to other math achievement tests but was more focused on what affects “economic opportunity and other real-world outcomes,” according to the study.

Daniel Berch, an education professor at the University of Virginia and former colleague of Geary’s, said the study is important because it informs people where and when they have to begin remediating the problem.

“It doesn’t tell you how (to remediate the problem),” Berch said. “But that’s not a shortcoming. It’s not that kind of study.”
Geary said there are ideas on how to intervene and improve early number knowledge, but he doesn’t know how to improve it yet.

"Teaching kids to count isn’t that helpful," Geary said. "If they can count, it doesn’t mean they understand."

Berch said several studies are being done targeting what can effectively improve students’ early number knowledge, including a study published by Hammill Institute on Disabilities.

The Hammill study showed that students placed in the intervention group, which focused on concepts related to counting, comparing and manipulating sets, did better than the control group, showing there are interventions for poor early number system knowledge.

Geary is currently working on studying preschool children to determine even more basic skills and find what could be leading to poor early number knowledge, though he said he is just getting started.

"It’s critical to figure out why they’re having trouble," he said.
A passing thought on Twitter

Justin Dyer
Midwest Voices contributing columnist

After complaining about the dehumanizing effects of social media in posts such as this one, I finally threw in the towel and joined the Twitterverse (or is it Twittersphere?). As a professor/writer/politics junkie, it has become a professional necessity. But a few days after joining the social networking site, I already feel the seductive allure of “following” people and being “followed.” Twitter amplifies our desire to be a part of what C.S. Lewis referred to as the Inner Ring. In a 1944 address to a group of college students, Lewis contended that the desire to be liked by others, to be admitted to an allusive inner circle, to be “in the know” and to feel important, was one of the “permanent mainsprings of human action” – and quite possibly the passion that would lead us to moral ruin. Lewis’s antidote to “the quest of the Inner Ring” was true friendship, and his conclusion is worth quoting at length:

If in your spare time you consort simply with the people you like, you will again find that you have come unawares to a real inside: that you are indeed snug and safe at the centre of something which, seen from without, would look exactly like an Inner Ring. But the difference is that the secrecy is accidental, and its exclusiveness a by-product, and no one was led thither by the lure of the esoteric: for it is only four or five people who like one another meeting to do things that they like. This is friendship. Aristotle placed it among the virtues. It causes perhaps half of all the happiness in the world, and no Inner Ring can ever have it.

So follow me on Twitter. Or don’t. Whatever.

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