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Senate adds back higher ed money

House budget had cut $14M.

By Rudi Keller

JEFFERSON CITY — The University of Missouri and other state colleges and universities would receive $14 million more next year under the Senate budget plan being developed this week than in the House-passed version.

Under Gov. Jay Nixon's original budget proposal, most schools saw their core budgets cut by about 1 percent with that money and new funding, for a total of $34 million, directed through a performance funding system. Because the UM System met all five performance benchmarks, it was slated to receive $16.9 million, bringing its appropriation to $411 million in the coming year.

The House, which cut $14 million from higher education funding and divvied up the $20 million based on this year's allocations, approved a $404.2 million appropriation for the UM system.

Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Kurt Schaefer, R-Columbia, said he restored Nixon's original appropriation after making a series of small cuts in other areas of the budget. He did not add more, and he did not deviate from Nixon's proposal, because he sees little chance of changes becoming law. "In some ways it makes sense," Schaefer said of the performance funding model. "The other thing is, the governor is going to do it anyway."

History shows Nixon will withhold money he doesn't want to spend and shape the remainder to fit his vision of how it should be spent, Schaefer said. Only a pending Supreme Court case, where Auditor Tom Schweich is challenging Nixon's withholding authority, could change the governor's habits, he said.

The proper way for Nixon to deal with spending items he dislikes is to veto them, Schaefer said, but by withholding the money, Nixon prevents lawmakers from second-guessing his decisions.

"If the court rules in favor of the governor, then there is no longer any reason to have the veto authority of the governor and the ability to veto override," Schaefer said. "That is an important portion of the constitutional process that would be nullified."
Lawmakers are working on a new formula to control all higher education funding. When and if it passes, it will divide state support based on factors such as the cost of education for various levels such as undergraduate or professional education.

If Schaefer's higher appropriation is approved in the Senate, the final amount will be determined in negotiations between the House and Senate.
Curators vote to expand stress-reducing program for UM System employees

ROLLA — **A program that provides stress-prevention services to University of Missouri System employees in Columbia is expanding to the rest of the system.**

The UM System Board of Curators voted Thursday to extend the University Employee Assistance Program to UM campuses in Rolla, St. Louis and Kansas City.

Through the program, system employees can receive stress training, health tips and counseling on topics such as marital problems, substance abuse and friction in the workplace, said James Hunter, the program's director.

In a presentation to the board, system Vice President of Human Resources Betsy Rodriguez said the expanded program will cost the system between $350,000 and $400,000 annually and will be included in employees' overall benefits.

Hunter said the program specializes in prevention before primary care is necessary.

Recently, the program administered a job-stress survey to employees in the MU Campus Facilities landscape department. Hunter said he identified "team pressures" in worker-to-worker relationships that could be improved and noticed poor health habits among employees such as smoking and a high-fat diet.

"It's crucial to intervene early rather than waiting for a major crisis," he said. "It's the same mentality as flossing and brushing your teeth to prevent tooth decay."

Hunter will monitor the expanded programs in Rolla, St. Louis and Kansas City from his hub in Columbia, according to meeting documents. Currently, MU is the only campus in the system with any type of employee assistance program, Jennifer Hollingshead, the system's spokeswoman, said.

During the past six years, the University Employee Assistance program has seen its clientele increase by 121 employees, with 381 clinical visitors in 2011-2012, according to statistics provided by the program.

Employees from University Hospital frequented the program's services the most, accounting for more than 25 percent of the visits in 2011-2012.
Hunter said there's no timetable for when the new programs will be operational at the new sites, but he's in the process of hiring personnel, including a full-time employee in Columbia.

"We've had success, but we're not rigid. Each campus has unique needs," he said.

Here are other items of note from the board's meeting Thursday at the Missouri University of Science and Technology:

- The board discussed the results of a debt capacity study of the UM System. System Treasurer Thomas Richards presented the study, which estimated $500 million in debt issuance needs in the next five years. System administrators said the system's credit rating could downgrade in the coming years. The study concluded that the system's credit rating was fairly strong, but if the drop in credit rating were to occur, the system's credit rating would remain strong relative to other public universities.

- The board discussed the preliminary system budget for the 2013-14 academic year, which has been revised since the curators' January meeting. The system expects to bring in $2.9 billion and spend about $2.8 billion. This prediction accounts for the 1.7 percent increase in resident undergraduate tuition and fees, which was approved in January, and assumes the system will not receive an increase in state funding from the previous year. It does not include unapproved items, such as the $16.5 million in performance funding recommended by Gov. Jay Nixon. A finalized budget will be presented for approval at the board's June meeting.
Facebook Study Finds Anxiety, Alcohol Use Tied To Engagement

Scroll through your Facebook feed and you're likely to endure artful photos of people's lunches, statuses bragging about European vacations, and plenty of vague emotional broadcasting ("So upset right now.")

It turns out the people posting this anodyne material may be more likely to have anxiety or alcohol problems than the people who tend to stay away from the site altogether.

A new study conducted by Russell Clayton, now a doctoral student at the University of Missouri School of Journalism, found that college freshmen who were anxious or drank to excess were more "emotionally engaged" with Facebook than average students.

A university press release details the study, which was originally published in the Journal of Computers in Human Behavior.

Clayton asked 225 students about their "perceived levels of loneliness, anxiousness, alcohol use, and marijuana use" as well as their level of Facebook engagement.

The anxiety piece of the study seems intuitive. "People who perceive themselves to be anxious are more likely to want to meet and connect with people online, as opposed to a more social, public setting," Clayton said.

As for alcohol, Clayton explained that "when people who are emotionally connected to Facebook view pictures and statuses of their Facebook friends using alcohol, they are more motivated to engage in similar online behaviors in order to fit in socially."

Since alcohol is considered socially acceptable, Clayton theorizes, people who drink a lot may feel a pull toward social networking. Marijuana, on the other hand, is not considered as normative, and people who use it reported less Facebook connectedness.

Studies on the mental state of Facebook users are nothing new. In 2010, researchers found, perhaps unsurprisingly, that people who use the site heavily are more likely to be narcissistic than others.
And whether Facebook is a healthy venue for anxious people is hardly obvious. A 2012 study found that simply using the site makes many people anxious.
Teens, obesity and links to sleep, TV time and Vitamin D: Healthy Living

By Katy Muldoon, The Oregonian

Scientists seem to spend a lot of time pondering teens and their weight. Check out a few of the studies making news:

SNOOZE TIME: Parents might want to let junior sleep in.

A new study by researchers from the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania and published in the journal Pediatrics, showed that fewer hours of sleep is associated with greater increases in adolescent body mass index among study participants aged 14 to 18. Increasing sleep duration to 10 hours per day, especially for those in the upper half of the BMI distribution, the study suggests, could help to reduce the prevalence of adolescent obesity.

TV TIME: Researchers at Boston Children's Hospital have shown that paying attention to TV is strongly associated with higher body mass index, medicalxpress.com reports. The study, published in next month's issue of Pediatrics but already online, found no association between BMI and attention to video games or computers, despite the duration of use.

VITAMIN D: Vitamin D supplements can help obese children and teens control their blood-sugar levels, which may help them stave off Type 2 diabetes, researchers found in a study involving prediabetic obese children and adolescents in the University of Missouri's Adolescent Diabetic Obesity Program.

"For clinicians, the main message from this research is to check the vitamin D status of their obese patients, because they're likely to have insufficient amounts," said Catherine Peterson, associate professor of nutrition and exercise physiology. "Adding vitamin D supplements to their diets may be an effective addition to treating obesity and its associated insulin resistance."

The study was published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition.

-- Katy Muldoon
Anxiety and alcohol use among college students significantly predict emotional connectedness to Facebook, a recent study has revealed.

The study, published in The Journal of Computers in Human Behaviour by Russell Clayton, a Ph.D. student at the University of Missouri School of Journalism, indicated the precursors that lead to Facebook connections with people online, rather than in a more social, public setting. The study conducted under Randall Osborne, Brian Miller and Crystal Oberle's supervision at Texas State University included a survey of over 225 college freshmen students on their perceived levels of loneliness, anxiousness, alcohol use and marijuana use.

The findings reveal that students who reported higher levels of anxiousness and alcohol use appeared to be more emotionally connected with the social networking site. Also students who reported higher levels of loneliness and anxiousness like to use Facebook as a platform to connect with others. The alcohol use not only enhances emotional connection with Facebook, but also promotes more alcohol consumption through images and status updates by friends using alcohol, according to the study. Clayton said that since alcohol use is socially acceptable, increased alcohol use might cause an increase in emotional connectedness to Facebook among college students. The researchers also found that marijuana use predicted the opposite: a lack of emotional connectedness with Facebook.

Explaining the connection between marijuana use and Facebook connectedness, Clayton claimed that Marijuana use is viewed as less normative compared to alcohol use, thus fewer people post images and updates on its use. So, people engaging in marijuana use are less likely to be emotionally attached with Facebook, the study said. Students who reported high levels of perceived loneliness were not emotionally connected with Facebook, but definitely use it as a tool to connect with others, it added.
COLUMBIA — Tipawan Suannani described her life as materialistic. She was married to a businessman. She cared about clothing and jewelry. But when Suannani, who lives in Thailand, decided to become a Buddhist monk, her life changed.

"After this I feel very light," she said. "Light body and mind. I can be free. I'm not a prisoner of wanting anymore."

Community elders like her are honored at the Songkran Festival, a New Year's celebration in Thailand that lasts three days.

The MU Thai Student Association hosted Suannani at its eighth-annual Grand Songkran Festival on Thursday. The event, originally intended to take place outdoors on the Mel Carnahan Quadrangle, was moved inside to Stotler Lounge in Memorial Union due to cold weather.

The Songkran Festival represents an opportunity to praise and thank elders for their help with families and communities. In Thailand, people celebrate the holiday by taking to the streets and splashing one another with water perfumed with flower petals, providing relief from April temperatures, which average in the low 90s.

At the MU festival in Stotler, elders sat in a line of chairs while MU students poured water over their hands four times, a sign of respect.

Guests sampled Thai food, such as a curry and rice dish and coconut ice cream, listened to traditional music and browsed tables lined with Thai formal clothing and jewelry.

Weerut Rutngamlug, who attended the festival, said the same practice of pouring water on elders' hands is used to show respect in the temple as well. Rutngamlug came to the United States from Thailand in 1971 and now attends a temple in St. Louis.

"We go to the temple, we do the same thing with the water to the Buddha, to the monk, so they give you a blessing," she said. "That's how we celebrate."

MU graduate student Chantra Promnoi said when she grew up in Thailand, her grandparents took care of her during the day while her parents worked far from their home. She said the norm is for
extended families to live close together, and for grandparents to play an important role in children’s lives.

“They can give me or give everyone in the family education, or show them to do all of the right ways,” she said. “We learn from the past.”
MU chair to lead national doctor’s organization

COLUMBIA, MO (AP) - The chairman of the internal medicine department at the University of Missouri School of Medicine has been named to lead the nation’s largest medical specialty organization.

The university says in a release that Dr. David Fleming will be named president-elect of the American College of Physicians.

Fleming's 1-year term as president-elect begins during the organization's annual meeting, which opened Thursday in San Francisco. Fleming will then serve from 2014 to 2015 as president of the organization, which has about 133,000 members.

Fleming is also director of the Center for Health Ethics at the university's medical school.
Curators review preliminary budget, prepare statements about institutions’ future

The UM System Board of Curators convened in the Havener Center at the Missouri University of Science and Technology on Thursday.

The governing body of the university system reviewed preliminary budget reports for the fiscal year 2014.

Preliminary budget predictions assume state funding will account for 14 percent of the $2.9 billion budget, according to official documents.

The largest portion of the budget, about 45 percent, comes from sales, services and patient revenues, and nineteen percent of the overall budget comes from net tuition and fees. The preliminary budget includes about $266 million in scholarships.

The board also projects that enrollment, which has grown by about 19,000 students since 2001, will bring about $3.5 million in revenue.

UM System President Timothy Wolfe will give a report on the system Friday, and each of the chancellors of the four campuses in the university system will give statements about the future of their institutions, according to the board’s agenda.

Challenges facing the university system include reduced state and federal funding and limits on tuition increases, according to official documents.

MU’s strategy statement focuses on four themes, including strengthening interdisciplinary research, faculty recruitment and development, enhancing campus infrastructure and resources, and strategic investment to drive local and state economic development and education.

The chancellors will provide detailed plans to meet their objectives in the board’s next meeting at MU from June 13-14. The development of a strategic planning process for the next five years became a priority when Wolfe announced the strategy in 2012.
Doctors urged to pause before they post, text or e-mail

Doctors should not "friend" patients on Facebook, should text them with "extreme caution" and should use e-mail only with patients who understand the risks of lost privacy, says the latest set of guidelines to help doctors navigate the online world.

The potential benefits of online contact between patients and providers are real, say the experts behind the guidelines from the American College of Physicians and the Federation of State Medical Boards, published online today in the Annals of Internal Medicine.

But the risks also are real and often underestimated or not even considered, especially by young physicians or medical students who grew up in a highly-connected world, says David Fleming, an internist from the University of Missouri. He leads an ethics committee for the physicians' group, which represents internists nationwide.

Among risks: that texts or e-mails will be seen by people other than the intended recipients or that doctors will, purposely or accidentally, end up giving online medical advice to people they don't know in blog comments, tweets, Facebook posts or other online spaces.

The groups also warn doctors to look out for their professional reputations – to avoid, for instance, posting vacation pictures or party videos in public forums. It's best, the guidelines say, to maintain separate professional and personal online personas and to use privacy settings to maintain boundaries.

The gist of the guidelines, Fleming says: "Think twice before you hit the send button and before you use any means of communication other than talking to patients behind closed doors."

The guidelines are in line with those previously disseminated by the American Medical Association and the medical board federation. But they are "more comprehensive" and give physicians more concrete advice about "how to avoid getting in trouble," says Humayun Chaudhry, president and CEO of the federation.

The advice is sound, but the truth is that many physicians already are too timid about using online communication, says Kevin Pho, an internist who practices in Nashua, N.H., and is well known for his blog KevinMD. He did not work on the guidelines but is co-author of a new book,
"Social media can help better connect doctors and patients," he says. "It's a shame that a lot of doctors are shying away from it."

Used appropriately, he says, a doctor's professional Facebook page or blog can provide a wealth of information to patients, including links to reputable health websites and the doctor's take on health stories that are in the news. Doctors also need to use e-mail and other forms of personal electronic communication, he says, "because that's where the patients are."

Some patients are more connected than others. Dave deBronkart, a kidney cancer survivor who is also from Nashua and blogs as "e-Patient Dave," is in the highly-connected camp. He says the benefits of online connection and collaboration between patients and providers are huge and "the risks are what any common sense person should know about being online."

Fleming agrees there's great potential. He says he e-mails with his own patients. "They love it because they can access me almost any time, day or night." He does warn patients that e-mail privacy can never be guaranteed.

The report says text messaging is "not analogous to e-mail because of its abbreviated format and the greater possibility of missed messages." It urges physicians not to use it even with established patients "except with extreme caution and with patient consent."

No set of online guidelines can be the last word, Chaudhry says: "We'll have to update them as the technology changes."
Pledge’s Death Leads KU Fraternity to Go Dry

By MARÁ ROSE WILLIAMS

No MU Mention

Conjure a mental picture of a college fraternity house and you might come up with the beer- and booze-soaked abode of the Deltas in “Animal House.”

A freshman at the University of Kansas, Dylan Clark (center) studied in the library of Sigma Alpha Epsilon, a fraternity that has gone dry this semester after pledge Jason Wren died in 2009 from alcohol poisoning.

But more fraternities are working to shed the popular image of being one big keg party — including the University of Kansas chapter of Sigma Alpha Epsilon, the house where 19-year-old freshman pledge Jason Wren died after a night of binge drinking four years ago.

The SAE house, which today will hold its fourth annual memorial seminar on alcohol abuse prevention, went dry this semester.

“That means no alcohol, no parties anywhere in the house at anytime,” said John Stacy, who advises the house as president of the chapter’s house corporation.

Good luck with that, said Peter Smithhisler, president and CEO of the North-American Interfraternity Council, which has 5,500 member fraternities.

“It is not an easy task because it still is not the norm,” he said.

But it is a trend.

“There is a large movement nationwide, thanks in part to liability, risk management and common sense, to have fraternity houses go completely dry,” said Amy Long, who chairs the advisory board of KU’s SAE chapter.

Smithhisler said many more fraternities “are substance free than you might think.” He estimated the number at perhaps 20 percent of chapters nationwide.

Fifteen years ago, it was closer to zero.

In 2000, the national headquarters of Phi Delta Theta was one of the first to ban alcohol at all 157 of its fraternity houses across the country.
In the past decade, more national fraternity offices have prohibited members from having alcohol or drugs in their houses. Some fraternities ban alcohol in common areas but allow members who are at least 21 to have alcohol in their bedrooms. In those fraternities, parties with alcohol must be held at another venue.

The SAE house at KU had that policy. But keeping a big brother from sharing alcohol with an underage brother is hard to police. The new ban allows a member three alcohol violations before he’s kicked out of the house.

The KU fraternity has been working toward the new policy since Wren died March 8, 2009. His death was a springboard for the fraternity to join a campus discussion on the effects of alcohol abuse. The memorial seminar, part of that effort, is co-sponsored by the Delta Gamma sorority.

“Since going alcohol free, we have seen it as a reason to better the house,” said Robert Abby, a junior and chairman of the Jason Wren initiative. “We are looking for higher GPAs and more philanthropy and community service.”

Abby admitted that it hasn’t been an easy thing for the fraternity brothers to do.

“It has definitely been an adjustment,” he said. “But when it came down to it, the guys all knew it was the right thing to do and the right time to do it.”

Of the 15 fraternity houses at KU, SAE is the second to go dry, behind Phi Delta Theta, which banned alcohol 13 years ago. All Panhellenic sororities that include housing at KU and nationwide are alcohol free.

The National Pan-Hellenic Council governing Black Greek organizations, citing “the alarming number of disastrous incidents in which alcohol and drugs play a part,” prohibits the sale or consumption of alcohol at all council-sponsored events.

At Kansas State University, nine of 19 fraternity houses are alcohol-free.

The move to prohibit alcohol at the SAE house at KU didn’t come from the fraternity’s national office. Last fall, chapter members took the idea to their advisory board, which was put in place to help the fraternity weather the storm after Wren’s death.

He was found in his bed at the SAE house the afternoon after a night that began with him drinking with friends at a Mexican restaurant in Lawrence. When he returned home to the fraternity house that night, Wren drank more alcohol until he passed out in his bed. An autopsy indicated he’d died of alcohol poisoning.

Police and campus investigators found the fraternity had done nothing criminal to lead to Wren’s death. The fraternity settled out of court for an undisclosed amount in a civil lawsuit filed by Wren’s parents.

“We were in a hole four years ago,” Stacy said. “Our pledge class dropped significantly. We did nothing wrong, but Jason did die in our house and right or wrong, we had to go through the fallout.”

Stacy said that since SAE went dry, pledge class numbers have jumped this semester. He wouldn’t say how few pledges the fraternity had each of the past three years, but he said it has 31 pledges now. About 50 members live in the off-campus house, which has room for 65.
Stacy said he hopes other fraternity houses on the KU campus will follow SAE.

"I encourage going dry," he said. "I think all fraternities ought to take a good look at the idea."

To those fraternities resisting the wave toward alcohol prohibition, Stacy said, "sooner or later insurance companies are no longer going to insure this type of behavior, or they will make it so expensive no one will be able to afford it."

No insurance, he said, no fraternity house.
Panel OKs education funding bill

Model is based on performance.

By EMILY DONALDSON Missouri Digital News

JEFFERSON CITY — After Gov. Jay Nixon called for increased performance-based funding for higher education in his State of the State address this January, a funding model for such a formula will finally reach the Senate floor for debate.

The higher education funding formula bill was voted out of the Senate Education Committee yesterday in a 7-2 vote. It is sponsored by the committee chairman, Sen. David Pearce, R-Warrensburg. The formula would divide higher education funding into six main categories within each institution: academic support, institutional support, instruction, public service, research and student services.

Ten percent of the total funds would go toward performance-based funding. If an institution satisfied certain performance measures such as increased student retention, better graduation rates or improved learning, it would be eligible to receive the funding. However, if an institution did not perform well enough to receive additional funding, it would not have to fear losing all support: A provision would require funding to be no less than 98 percent of the previous year's funding.

Pearce said it is important higher education is funded based on performance instead of which institution has the most political representation. He cited a $1.3 million amendment proposed in a Senate Appropriations Committee hearing Tuesday by Sen. Mike Parson, R-Bolivar, that sought additional funding for Missouri State University.

A House bill that would create taxing districts to support University of Missouri Extension programming also was voted out of committee in yesterday's hearing. Taxes would only be levied with a simple majority of votes within the county. An overseeing council for each district would supervise the direction of funds and extension programming.

Sen. Ed Emery, R-Lamar, said he worried about additional taxes being levied for an already-funded program.
"I do still have some concerns about taxing authority, but they are mitigated by the counties having the option to opt out," Emery said.
Professors to hold talk with Gandhi

Two University of Missouri professors will hold a conversation with Rajmohan Gandhi, biographer and grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, Friday morning.

Journalism Professor Charles Davis and political science Professor Paul Wallace will sit down with Gandhi at 10:30 a.m. in Stotler Lounge in Memorial Union. The free event is open to the public.

Davis said he was approached by representatives of Ellis Library to interview Gandhi. Davis then asked Wallace, who has spent a lot of time in India.

"When you have Gandhi's grandson, I certainly want to talk about the way he sees nonviolence manifesting around the world," Davis said.

In particular, Davis is interested in getting Gandhi's point of view on the Arab Spring and the India-Pakistan conflict.

Davis said he also is excited to hear about Gandhi's recent book, "A Tale of Two Revolts: India's Mutiny and the American Civil War."
Graduate business students from schools in the Southeastern Conference are at University of Missouri this week for an academic competition among the prospective MBAs.

The inaugural SEC MBA Case Competition begins continues through Saturday on campus. It's one of several initiatives of SECU, the conference's academic component.

Teams of four graduate business students representing each of the 14 SEC member schools will evaluate case studies provided by event sponsor AT&T and present potential business plans.