UM System campuses refine their strategic plans

By Karyn Spory

Saturday, April 13, 2013 at 2:00 am

ROLLA — Chancellors from each of the four University of Missouri System campuses presented updated strategic plans during the Board of Curators meeting yesterday.

Last year, UM System President Tim Wolfe announced that additional state funding would be doled out depending on each of the four campus' strategic plans. Each set targets to achieve within the next five to seven years.

The campuses' presentations yesterday served as updates in advance of the June meeting of the Curators at which the campuses will present their final plans.

MU Chancellor Brady Deaton has placed an emphasis on enhancing the university's academic stature within the American Association of Universities by 2018. Deaton said MU plans to achieve this by building upon the interdisciplinary research and teaching strengths of Mizzou Advantage.

As previously stated, Deaton said he plans on advancing MU's AAU standing by increasing the number of faculty. He proposes 100 new tenure-track and 100 non-tenure-track faculty to be hired over a five-year period.

"It's very critical we recruit more ... high-quality, world-class faculty," Deaton said.

As for funding this venture, Deaton said the university would have to reallocate resources as needed, through the "billion plus" fundraising campaign, and new revenue through the commercialization of property. Deaton added that 80 percent of the salary for non-tenure-track faculty will be provided by new revenue sources generated by the "educational mission and research that generates competitive funding."

Leo Morton, chancellor of University of Missouri-Kansas City, says his campus will grow enrollment to 20,000 and increase graduation rates by 10 percent by 2020. While increasing graduation rates, the university also hopes to increase retention by 15 percent.
"This isn't growth for the sake of growth," Morton said, noting the need for professionals, especially engineers, in the Kansas City area.

Missouri University of Science and Technology Chancellor Cheryl Schrader said she plans to provide top return on investments by 2020. Schrader says the university already is known for its return on investment for students, but she plans to build upon that foundation and expand the return on investment to employers who hire S&T students, as well as research partners and donors.

The University of Missouri-St. Louis plans to increase the number of degrees awarded by 20 percent by 2018. More than 3,000 degrees were awarded in 2012. By 2018, UMSL plans to enhance relationships by treating students as future alumni and enhancing the work environment and compensation for faculty and staff. UMSL also will create new community partnerships and incorporate those partners in research and curriculum.
UM curators call on legislators to find Medicaid solution

By Karyn Spory

Saturday, April 13, 2013 at 2:00 am

ROLLA — The University of Missouri Board of Curators will be sending a resolution to Missouri legislators urging them to reach a solution on Medicaid expansion.

The resolution, which was approved by a 7-0 vote — Curator David Steward was absent for the vote — does not say what that solution should look like. Instead, it asks state leaders to "come together in open dialogue, discuss, negotiate and reach a solution that fits Missouri values."

It also states that last year MU Health Care provided more than $50 million in uncompensated care. If legislators were to approve Medicaid expansion, MU Health Care would stand to receive a substantial increase in revenue.

"The only way there will be fewer uninsured patients in the state of Missouri is if our elected leaders go into agreement to expand Medicaid," Curator Don Downing said.

The Affordable Care Act will give states the opportunity to expand their Medicaid programs to cover individuals with incomes at or below 138 percent of poverty. For the first three years, the federal government would pick up the extra costs associated with the expansion. By 2020, the federal government would still fund 90 percent of the costs.

"I think it is very important to us, our system and our job as curators to let our elected leaders know how this would affect the University of Missouri System and our hospital system," Downing said.

Curator David Bradley said he feared making a specific policy proposal because the issue was so contentious.

"I think this is a public policy issue that is a hot potato in Jefferson City," he said.

Curator Ann Covington wondered what it meant for the Board of Curators to be an advocate for the UM System.
"I think we're more effective advocates when we do not get in the middle of a highly contentious political issue," she said.
UM curators urge agreement on Medicaid expansion in Missouri

Friday, April 12, 2013 | 7:32 p.m. CDT
BY Dan Burley

ROLLA — The UM System Board of Curators voted Friday to support a compromise about Medicaid expansion in Missouri. The board also heard reports from the University of Missouri System chancellors on the futures of their campuses.

In a unanimous vote, the curators agreed to urge the General Assembly and Gov. Jay Nixon to reach an agreement on whether to accept money from the federal government to expand Medicaid coverage under President Obama's Affordable Care Act. They did not advocate one way or another on the expansion.

If the state's public health insurance program were expanded, MU Health Care would receive compensation for the care it now provides Missouri citizens not eligible for Medicaid, according to documents provided at the board's meeting. MU Health Care provided more than $50 million in uncompensated health care last year.

Health care expansion would provide Medicaid coverage to people at or below 138 percent of the poverty level, according to an MU School of Medicine study. That's just more than $15,850 for a household of one and about $32,500 for a household of four. Roughly one in seven Missourians are already eligible for Medicaid, according to the Missouri Foundation for Health.

Currently, the Affordable Care Act will enable 525,000 Missourians to buy subsidized health coverage when it takes effect next year. In Boone County, 12,500 residents will be eligible.

Gov. Nixon has called Medicaid expansion under Obama's health care law a top priority for this legislative session, but he has yet to find common ground with state senators opposed to the plan, according to the Associated Press.

The board concurred, after a lengthy discussion, that the revenue boost the system and MU Health Care would receive under Medicaid expansion was worthy of supporting a compromise solution in Jefferson City.

"One of our jobs is to be advocates," curator Don Downing said. "It's important that we sound off and give our view on how this issue directly affects the system."
Early in the discussion at the Missouri University of Science and Technology, some board members were concerned that directly supporting an expansion of Medicaid in Missouri — Downing's original intent — was too political and outside the scope of the nonpartisan body.

"Medicaid is a political hot potato in Jefferson City," curator David Bradley said. "I think we risk alienating one branch of government to appease another."

Last year, individual curators supported the failed proposition B, an increase in tobacco tax that would have generated funding for higher education, but the board did not speak as a whole, according to meeting documents.

When curator Ann Covington suggested Friday that the board draft a resolution that encourages a compromise about Medicaid expansion but does not support it either way, an agreement was met and the language finalized and finally passed.

Earlier in the meeting, UM System President Tim Wolfe addressed the tug of war between the Republican-led legislature against expansion and Nixon, a Democrat, who is for it: "If we turn down Medicaid, do we watch our federal dollars go to other states?" he told the board. “Do we watch regional hospitals close because they’re on thin margins anyway?”

**Strategy statements**

MU Chancellor Brady Deaton came before the board Friday to map MU's game plan for staying nimble in an evolving higher education environment.

In his presentation, Deaton explained to the board that MU will use tactics similar to those in its Mizzou Advantage initiative to remain competitive nationwide in the face of a consistent decline in state funding, a diminishing availability of federal research funds and a potential decrease in enrollment growth.

Deaton and the system’s three other chancellors delivered their campus’ strategy statements, a step in the system’s overall strategic planning campaign, at the board’s meeting. The system required each campus to draft a thesis-like strategy statement to define how it will distinguish itself within the system, compete nationally and achieve specified goals over the next several years.

"Don’t throw these (strategy statements) away," Wolfe said. "You can hold me accountable to these statements. I'm measuring myself by this, and I’m comfortable that all of the leaders on campus will, too."

The statements won’t be finalized until the curators' June meeting, when the campuses will list specific, time-bound actions that further explain how they’ll implement the tactics.

One tactic, Deaton said, is hiring more tenured, tenure-track and non-tenure-track faculty.
Within the next five years, Deaton plans for MU to hire an additional 100 tenured and tenure-track faculty, or 20 per year. He said he also expects MU to hire 100 more non-tenure-track faculty during the same time period.

Deaton said much of the revenue to pay for the potential tenured and tenure-track faculty will come from a private fundraising campaign that's still in its early stages but so far has raised $250 million.

Later, at a news conference, Wolfe was asked how much more specific the campus strategic statements would be when they are next presented in June. Using Deaton's MU plan as an example, Wolfe said he expects more specifics — for example, which departments would get more faculty.

"We can tell you we'll catch a fish, but that doesn't tell you everything," Wolfe said about expecting granular plans from each campus.

Other items of note from the board's meeting:

- The board approved a change in MU faculty bylaws that gives non-tenure-track faculty members the right to vote on campus issues except those concerning tenure or faculty who are tenured or tenure-track. MU faculty voted to approve this measure last week.
- The board approved its calendar for the 2013-2014 academic year.

The next board meeting is June 13-14 at MU.

Supervising editor is Elizabeth Brixey.
MU professor criticizes move on nuclear engineering faculty

Process lacked input, he claims.

By Karyn Spory

Friday, April 12, 2013 at 2:00 pm

A University of Missouri faculty member is calling for a review of faculty appointments to its changing nuclear engineering program.

Galen Suppes, a chemical engineering professor, brought forward a motion at Tuesday's spring general faculty meeting calling for the nullification of the appointment of 18 faculty members to the nuclear engineering program and to start the appointments from scratch. He claimed the university's Collective Rules and Regulations were disregarded when faculty members were appointed by administrators without input from faculty.

The faculty members include four from the Nuclear Science and Engineering Institute, the program that previously housed nuclear engineering graduate students but is being dissolved in favor of moving the area of study to the College of Engineering next fall. The rest come from various engineering emphasis areas.

Suppes said shared governance and faculty input on appointments are vital because "every degree program at the university is controlled by people who are experts in that area, and this is how we maintain the quality of our program."

He also said there were questions about the qualification of those appointed as nuclear engineering faculty. "When you create a new department and only one-fourth or less actually have degrees in" nuclear "engineering, that's a recipe for catastrophe," he said.

His motion says that new curriculum and admission requirements could occur only after nuclear engineering faculty are properly selected. Chancellor Brady Deaton opened admissions to the graduate nuclear engineering program this semester; they had been closed temporarily while the program was in flux.

Peter Vallentyne, professor of philosophy and member of the Graduate Faculty Senate, said the curriculum for the program had not been approved yet and that the College of Engineering is
developing proposed changes to the curriculum related to new areas of emphasis. Sanda Erdelez, president of the Graduate Faculty Senate and information science professor, said a proposal from the College of Engineering was submitted this semester to the Graduate Faculty Senate to create new emphasis areas to nuclear engineering, but it hasn't been approved.

University spokeswoman Mary Jo Banken said in regard to faculty appointments and curriculum decisions, "We are following the Collective Rules and Regulations concerning the reconstitution of the nuclear engineering program."

Banken noted that nuclear engineering is not a new program, although it is being moved to a new department.

"It is pulling together the nuclear engineering strengths of the university under the College of Engineering," she said.

She said the work to get it running was being done by a faculty committee and will go before the Graduate Faculty Senate for final approval. Citing a letter from Chancellor Brady Deaton, Banken said the faculty members from NSEI will continue to teach the existing curriculum until a faculty committee decides differently.

A vote was considered Tuesday on Suppes' motion, but because there was not a quorum, no action was taken. Suppes since has asked the MU Faculty Council to deliberate on the issue.

"This administration needs to learn that the collective rules, the contract they have with the faculty, says that the faculty will participate in shared governance. The administration has to allow" that "to happen," Suppes said.

This article was published in the Friday, April 12, 2013 edition of the Columbia Daily Tribune with the headline "MU professor criticizes move on nuclear faculty: Process lacked input, he claims."

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Posted in Education on Friday, April 12, 2013 2:00 pm.
MU chair to lead national doctor’s organization

Friday, April 12, 2013 | 10:17 a.m. CDT

BY The Associated Press

COLUMBIA — The chairman of the internal medicine department at the MU School of Medicine has been named to lead the nation's largest medical specialty organization.

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

Fleming's one-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.
UM online learning continues to grow

Curators hear data on burgeoning system.

By Karyn Spory

Friday, April 12, 2013 at 2:00 pm

As the format of higher education evolves, the University of Missouri System has worked to step up its online education presence, with a 28 percent increase in online learning over the past year.

University of Missouri Curators heard statistics on the growing programs during their board meeting taking place yesterday and today on the Missouri University of Science and Technology campus in Rolla. Steve Graham, UM senior associate vice president for academic affairs, cited the 28 percent increase across the four-campus system of students earning credit hours online.

He noted that the number came from classes taken completely online and were unduplicated, meaning students were each only counted once regardless of the number of online courses they were taking. Graham said the national average of growth is 9.3 percent.

Curator David Bradley of St. Joseph wondered how else the system could benchmark its progress. Graham said 26 percent of UM students take a 100 percent online course, compared with a national average of about 32 percent. However, the national average includes universities that have virtual campuses only.

"I'd say research universities are usually the last to come on board" with online learning, Graham said.

Although the growth proved positive, Curator John Phillips of Kansas City said he would rather know how the system's online learning compared with that at institutional peers rather than just year-to-year growth averages. He also questioned whether the system was marketing and encouraging the eLearning portal and the "readily transferrable" courses between the campuses.

"I think the answer is yes to both," Graham said.

In terms of marketing courses between campuses, he said the eLearning portal might have "faces" for each of the four campuses, but once logged in, a student could search for a course from any of the institutions.
"Our courses, among the institutions, have always transferred very well," he said.

Also yesterday, curators unanimously approved the expansion of the Employee Assistance Program to all UM campuses. EAP, designed to help employees deal with personal problems that could negatively affect their work, had previously only been accessible to MU faculty and staff, MU Health Care employees and UM System employees.

The program can help employees with managing stress, give health tips and provide counseling for substance abuse and issues in the home or workplace.

Betsy Rodriguez, vice president for human resources, said the estimated cost of the expanded program will be $350,000 to $400,000 annually and will be included in the overall benefit costs paid by departments as a percent of salary. She said the cost to expand the program will likely equal the reduction of costs to the current medical plan.

At MU, EAP is housed within the student counseling center. Rodriguez said it is likely the program will be affiliated with the student counseling centers at each campus.

This article was published in the Friday, April 12, 2013 edition of the Columbia Daily Tribune with the headline "UM online learning continues to grow: Curators hear data on burgeoning system."

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Posted in Education on Friday, April 12, 2013 2:00 pm.
MU professor wins conference honor

Friday, April 12, 2013 at 2:00 pm

A University of Missouri professor of wildlife management is among 14 professors from Southeastern Conference schools recognized for this year's SEC Faculty Achievement Awards.

Joshua Millspaugh, the O'Connor Distinguished Professor of Wildlife Management in MU's College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources, will receive a $5,000 honorarium from the SEC and also will be among the nominees for SEC Professor of the Year. That award brings an additional $15,000 for the winner.

The annual achievement awards recognize professors with "meritorious records in teaching and scholarship and who serve as role models for other faculty and students," an SEC news release said.

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Proposed Student-Loan Reforms Set Activists and Lawmakers at Odds

April 12, 2013, 3:36 pm
By Allie Bidwell

NO MENTION

Washington — With interest rates on federal student loans set to double this summer, student-advocacy groups have intensified their calls for Congress to find a way to avoid the increase, and lawmakers are scrambling to pass legislation that would overhaul the student-loan system.

President Obama’s loan-reform proposal, which he released on Wednesday as part of his budget for the 2014 fiscal year, suggests switching to a market-based rate, in which interest rates would be set annually and fixed for the duration of each loan.

But some experts say that the options being laid out, including the president’s proposal, will provide only short-term relief for borrowers, and that allowing the rates to double may be a better option in the long run.

Unless Congress acts before July 1, the rates on subsidized Stafford loans will double, from 3.4 percent to 6.8 percent. Lawmakers were in the same situation last year, but, in the midst of an election campaign, they voted to extend the rate cap. The hope was that such an extension would buy enough time to devise a comprehensive plan to make loans more affordable.

Under the Obama administration’s proposal, borrowers with subsidized Stafford loans would be charged a rate equal to the 10-year Treasury note plus 0.93 percentage points; borrowers with unsubsidized Stafford loans would pay an additional two percentage points; and parents and graduate students with PLUS loans would pay three percentage points more.

But rather than providing an interest-rate cap, which student-advocacy groups have been pushing for, the administration proposed expanding its “Pay as You Go” income-based repayment plan to all
borrowers. If that proposal were adopted, no borrower would pay more than 10 percent of his or her discretionary income, and borrowers would have their debt forgiven after 20 years of repayment.

Although that plan would temporarily drop rates below the current 3.4-percent level (a subsidized loan made today would carry a rate of 2.7 percent, for example), Barmak Nassirian, an independent higher-education analyst, said rates would jump back up and surpass that mark by 2016.

Mr. Nassirian, a former top official at the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, compared the administration’s proposal to current law, under which rates would double, and applied it retroactively (based on 10-year Treasury notes) and prospectively (based on Congressional Budget Office projections). Mr. Obama’s proposal, he concluded, would be a temporary victory for borrowers that would be followed by a high, permanent rate increase for all unsubsidized-loan borrowers and an even higher jump for subsidized-loan borrowers.

“If we go down the path they’re proposing,” Mr. Nassirian said, “instead of reorienting this in a rational and truly sustainable direction, they will make the mess much worse.”

No matter what numbers you use, Mr. Nassirian said, a clear pattern emerges: a brief window of significantly lower rates, followed by a potentially decades-long window of permanently much higher rates.

The Institute for College Access and Success, known as Ticas, also calculated that interest rates would drop for one to two years before approaching or surpassing the 6.8-percent rate that could begin this summer.

Interest rates on subsidized and unsubsidized loans would drop to 3 percent and 5 percent, respectively, for the 2013-14 academic year, for example. But by the 2018-19 academic year, Ticas estimated that subsidized interest rates would reach 6.13 percent, while unsubsidized rates would climb to 8.13 percent.

According to a joint statement issued on Wednesday by several student-advocacy groups, one problem with the administration's proposal is the lack of a cap for interest rates.

The proposal, they said, “offers no protection for students when rates inevitably begin to climb.”

Jason Delisle, director of the New America Foundation’s Federal Education Budget Project, first proposed such a rate structure. He said this week that interest rates would not be an issue because the income-based repayment plan would be extended to all borrowers. If monthly payments—which
Mr. Delisle called the true indicator of loan affordability—were capped, then borrowers would not have to worry about the interest rates of their loans.

With the rates subject to change from year to year, Mr. Delisle said, it would be unclear who would get the better deal, taxpayers or borrowers. By capping interest rates, the government would create a “backwards” situation in which it would provide a larger subsidy when the economy was strong and a smaller subsidy when the economy was weak, he said.

“Rates could be higher or lower,” Mr. Delisle said, “but there’s no other way to do it if you want the rates to be based on something.”

Instead, Mr. Delisle said, student-advocacy groups should focus their efforts on spreading awareness of the income-based repayment plan and on making it easier for borrowers to enroll in the plan.

“You can’t talk about rates without mentioning income-based repayment now,” he said. “If this is available, why does the rate matter? It doesn’t.”

Still, Mr. Nassirian and student-advocacy groups said that more time was needed to develop a comprehensive and sustainable solution to the interest-rate problem.

As Mr. Nassirian put it, lawmakers should be willing to let interest rates rise to a higher level, even to 6.8 percent, “instead of making a permanent change that would effectively jack up the rates for everybody permanently.”
Business students from around SEC compete in inaugural MBA Case Competition

Saturday, April 13, 2013 | 8:09 p.m. CDT; updated 8:47 p.m. CDT, Saturday, April 13, 2013

COLUMBIA — Teams from every Southeastern Conference school competed in relative secrecy in Columbia this past week.

In this case, though, the competition took place off the field and in Cornell Hall.

**MU's Trulaske College of Business hosted the conference's debut MBA Case Competition, which ended Saturday afternoon.**

The competition involved teams of four Master of Business Administration students from each of the SEC's 14 schools. Teams took on a live case, involving a real business problem from the competition's sponsor, AT&T.

For two days, each team analyzed the problem and proposed a possible solution to a panel of judges including corporate executives and professors.

The exact details of the case remain a secret because it is a real matter of business for the company. Devon Grimme, a member of the winning team from the University of Florida, said it dealt with adapting to changing consumer preferences.

The teams were divided into three divisions, and the winning team from each division advanced to a final round.

At a celebration Saturday, judges awarded $10,000 to the team from the University of Florida. Teams from the University of Arkansas and Texas A&M University came in second and third place, respectively.

"It's incredible because it's the inaugural year for the SEC, so winning was historic," said Ken Miller, who celebrated with teammates Grimme, Spencer Siegel and Kimberly Thelwell.

MU competed in similar competitions as a member of the Big 12 and wanted to continue the competition as part of the SEC. Business school administrators gauged interest from other SEC business schools before proposing the idea to the SECU, the SEC's academic initiative.
"We thought this would be a way to bring unique experiences to the SEC," said Joan Gabel, dean of the Trulaske College of Business.

The SEC made a three-commitment deal to help start and support the case competition. Alabama will host the competition next year.

*Reporter Ian Servantes contributed to this report.*

*Supervising editor is Zach Murdock.*
MEDSOCKET GETS BACKING

By Jacob Barker

Saturday, April 13, 2013 at 2:00 am

MedSocket, a search tool that aggregates medical information databases for care providers, was awarded $100,000 by the University of Missouri System's Enterprise Investment Program.

Karl Kochendorfer, a primary care physician, has been working on the idea since the early 2000s. The investment from the UM System, which it awards after an annual competition to help startups using university technology, can go as high as $250,000, according to a news release. Mike Nichols, UM System Vice President for Research and Economic Development, said at a meeting this week that the initial investment is $100,000.

The university's commitment comes on top of $250,000 it obtained through the Missouri Technology Corp. and $166,500 from local angel investment group Centennial Investors.

Kochendorfer recently left the University of Missouri to become the chief information officer at the University of Illinois at Chicago. In an email, Kochendorfer said the rest of MedSocket's team is still based in Columbia, and he is using his position to expand to more health systems in the Midwest. MedSocket already is being used by practitioners at University of Missouri Health Care.

Jacob Barker is the Tribune's business reporter. Reach him at (573) 815-1722 or jbarker@columbiatribune.com.

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Posted in Saturday Business, Street Talk on Saturday, April 13, 2013 2:00 am.
Some states dropping GED as test changes to online, price spikes

Monday, April 15, 2013 | 6:00 a.m. CDT

BY HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH/The Associated Press

KANSAS CITY — Several dozen states are looking for an alternative to the GED high school equivalency test because of concerns that a new version coming out next year is more costly and will no longer be offered in a pencil and paper format.

The responsibility for issuing high school equivalency certificates or diplomas rests with states, and they've relied on the General Education Development exam since soon after the test was created to help returning World War II veterans.

But now 40 states and the District of Columbia are participating in a working group that's considering what's available besides the GED, and two test makers are hawking new exams.

"It's a complete paradigm shift because the GED has been the monopoly. It's been the only thing in town for high school equivalency testing. It's kind of like Kleenex at this point," said Amy Riker, director of high school equivalency testing for Educational Testing Service, which developed one of the alternative tests.

Last month, New York, Montana and New Hampshire announced they were switching to a new high school equivalency exam, and California officials began looking into amending regulations to drop the requirement that the state only use the GED test. Missouri has requested bids from test makers and plans to make a decision this month. Several others states, including Massachusetts, Maine, Indiana and Iowa, are making plans to request information about alternative exams.

Meanwhile, Tennessee and New Jersey are exploring offering more than one test.
"The national situation is definitely fluid," said Tom Robbins, Missouri's director of adult education and high school equivalency, noting that other states plan to use the GED for now and bid later.

The pushback comes as GED Testing Service prepares to introduce a new version of the exam in January. In the first revamp since for-profit Pearson Vue Testing acquired a joint ownership interest in the nonprofit Washington-based GED Testing Service, the cost of the test is doubling to $120. That's led to a case of sticker shock for test takers, nonprofits and states. Some states subsidize some or all of the expense of the exam, while others add an administrative fee. The new GED test would cost $140 to take in Missouri if the state sticks with it.

Kirk Proctor, of the Missouri Career Center, said the organization is looking for a way to cover the increased test cost for students participating in a GED preparation and job training program he oversees. He said his students can't come up with $140, noting they need help paying for the current, cheaper test.

"A lot of them are just barely making it," he said. "Transportation is a challenge. Eating is a challenge. For them, coming up with $140 for an assessment, it's basically telling them, 'Forget about ever getting this part of your life complete.'"

One program participant, Nicole Williams, a 21-year-old Kansas City mother of three, said she was hopeful she'd pass the GED test soon so she could avoid the electronic version. With it, she said, "you've got to learn how to type, use the computer, plus your GED. That's three things instead of just trying to focus all on your GED test."

Developers say the new version is needed because nearly all states are adopting tougher math and reading standards to ensure students are prepared for college and careers. Because the new version is so different, a million or so adults who have passed some but not all of the five parts of the current GED test must complete the missing sections by Dec. 31. If not, their scores will expire, and they'll have to begin again under the new program Jan. 1.

"The GED was in dangerous position of no longer being a reflection of what high schools were graduating," said Randy Trask, president and CEO of GED Testing Service, which previously was solely operated by the nonprofit American Council on Education.

He said the computerized version, which students are passing at higher rates than the paper version in pilot sites, will be cheaper to administer because states will no longer have to pick up the tab for things like grading the exam. For test-takers who fail a section, the computerized version provides details about what skills they need to work on before retaking the exam.

"I personally went into it a little bit naively," said Trask of the new version. "I don't know why I expected a marching band, but I did because I'm convinced that what we are doing is the right thing for the adults in this country."

Competitors responded with a paper version and a cheaper base price, though GED Testing Service said its price includes services the other two test makers don't. The alternative exams'
makers also said they will work with states to find ways to combine scores from the GED with their new exams so students who have passed some sections of the current GED won't be forced to start from scratch. GED Testing Service said that would undermine the validity of a state's equivalency credential or diploma.

Trask also said he feared the competing exams would be confusing for colleges and employers. But states considering switching say they'll put more emphasis on the equivalency credential or diploma they issue rather than the test taken to earn it.

Art Ellison, who leads the Bureau of Adult Education in New Hampshire, called the sudden choice in the exams "the new reality of adult education." His state and Montana are switching to HiSET, a $50 test that the Educational Testing Service, or ETS, is offering. Both states said cost influenced their decision, with Montana's Superintendent of Public Instruction Denise Juneau proclaiming in a news release that residents "looking to improve their economic situation by obtaining a high school equivalency diploma should not have to overcome a significant financial barrier in order to achieve that goal."

Ellison also noted that a paper option was important because many students in adult education classes lack the skills needed to take a computer-based test and that it will take time to beef up the courses to add that training.

Meanwhile, New York chose California-based CTB/McGraw-Hill's new Test Assessing Secondary Completion, or TASC. Developers said it will range in price from $50 to $60.

Regents Chancellor Merryl Tisch said in a news release that without the change, New York would have had to pay the GED test maker twice as much or limit the number of test takers because state law bars residents from being charged to take the equivalency exam.

"We can't let price deny anyone the opportunity for success."
Marie Steinwachs, sustainability pioneer, continues work at MU Extension

Students from the College of Engineering have been paired with companies statewide to improve environmentally friendly practices. Several interns have found ways to help companies save substantial costs. Others have been offered jobs at their internship sites. Marie Steinwachs, director of the Missouri Environmental Assistance Center, leads the internship program.

Monday, April 15, 2013 | 6:00 a.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — When Marie Steinwachs was 7, her mother called her to look out the window at their farm outside Buffalo, N.Y. A dark, oblong shape hovered over the front yard. It looked as if it was about to drop.

The young Steinwachs, a child of the Cold War, thought it resembled those things she was warned about in school during duck-and-cover drills. It even had fins like an atomic bomb.

In that moment, her short life flashed before her eyes. But after the blimp passed, Steinwachs believed she had been given another chance at life. Later, she would develop an irreverent sense of humor because of the incident. But it also made her believe in second chances.

That sensibility about second chances, of making things better, guides Steinwachs, 58, as director of the Missouri Environmental Assistance Center. At the center, which is part of MU Extension, she pairs students from the College of Engineering with companies statewide to improve environmentally friendly practices.

The main way she does this is through the Pollution Prevention Intern Program. The students measure energy efficiency in lights, boilers and compressors. They review waste audits and records. Steinwachs recalled one intern, who while reviewing his employer's bills, found an error that now saves that company $50,000 annually.

Stories like that keep her going — focus on the positives, she said, and on those second chances.

Fifteen minutes of fame

Steinwachs' own story as an advocate of the environment and sustainable practices goes back decades.

From Buffalo, her family moved to Florida. From there, Steinwachs made her way to southern Missouri and found work at a nonprofit. She was the caretaker of New Life Farm, an educational program in Drury that showcased sustainable lifestyles. Employees gave tours of the solar collectors and organic gardens.
Steinwachs developed her interpersonal management style there. After the farm’s funds ran out, she moved to Springfield to continue her work on sustainability.

In 1987, she formed the Household Hazardous Waste Project with Sondra Goodman, whose idea it was, and a few other young people. During this time, progressive thinking about safe environmental practices was developing. To the project members, raising public awareness was key.

Other programs addressing the safe disposal of hazardous consumer products were emerging across the country during this time as well, Goodman said. She said the program she and Steinwachs created was innovative because it focused on the safe use, storage and disposal of hazardous waste.

The program educated consumers to recognize that certain products would turn into hazardous waste — batteries, for example — and urged people to accept responsibility for protecting themselves, their families and the environment if they used them, Steinwachs said.

The first year, the program was in one county in southwest Missouri. A year later, it had expanded to 23 counties and, the year after that, went statewide. The success of the program led to conversations with manufacturers, retailers, government agencies and nongovernmental organizations — and contributed to a growing national movement, Steinwachs said.

The Household Hazardous Waste Project won three national awards starting in 1989 and into the early 1990s. In each case, a representative of the group flew to Washington, D.C., to be recognized at the White House; Steinwachs went once. She was supposed to go again but decided to invite a sponsor to represent her. Instead, she went to a Miami symposium on women and the environment.

Part of the lead-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, also known as the Earth Summit, in 1992, the symposium gathered about 1,500 women working on the front lines of environmentalism.

While there, Steinwachs met Marjory Stoneman Douglas, an early pioneer for that cause. In her book "The Everglades: River of Grass," Douglas wrote that the Florida Everglades was a complicated ecosystem worth conserving.

Looking back, Steinwachs thinks of the awards as her 15 minutes of fame. But she considers the symposium, and meeting Douglas, as one of the biggest highlights of her life.

In 1993, along with like-minded people across the country, Steinwachs founded the North American Hazardous Materials Management Association. The program stresses pollution prevention, along the same lines as the hazardous waste project, through partnerships with colleges, businesses and governmental officials.

**Right words, right time**

Even as she championed the environment, Steinwachs tried to keep the importance of human interaction foremost in management style. Leah Christian, the senior information specialist at the Missouri Environmental Assistance Center, can attest to that.
Four interns work for Steinwachs now, but Christian is the only other full-time employee — and she has known Steinwachs since she was a child. In 2011, Christian was at an MU career fair for the hospitality industry to make connections for a future sustainable hospitality symposium. It would be the first public event she would organize on her own.

Things were going well until Christian met a woman who said she didn’t believe in sustainability and would not attend the symposium.

This rattled Christian. She sat in her office later wondering whether anyone would show up to her event.

That’s when Steinwachs, whose office is next door in Engineering Building North, walked in and saw the devastated look on Christian’s face. Her confidence in organizing the symposium had taken a body blow.

Steinwachs sat down and listened as Christian confided her fears.

"Leah, it doesn’t matter if not everyone shows up," Steinwachs began. "You’ve done something here, and that is why I pushed you to organize this event in the first place, to show you that you could make things happen."

Steinwachs assured her that her plans for the event were solid.

"That is a key step in the right direction," Steinwachs told her. "This is a giant world, and we are facing numerous environmental challenges, but every time you get people to talk and think about sustainability, you are making a difference, even if you don’t see it right away."

For Christian, the moment was incredible and helped her push past her frustration. Steinwachs knew the right thing to say to her when she was down: Stay positive — you are making a difference.

And, Christian said, people did show up for her symposium.

**Keeping things light**

Even as she focuses on her work, Steinwachs is good at lightening the mood. Marcus Rivas, a longtime friend and head of the Environmental Protection Agency’s Region 7 Pollution Prevention Program in Kansas City, recalled a sweet moment a few years ago.

They had been together at a daylong meeting on pollution prevention held in the Kansas City Public Library. The event had been stressful, Rivas said, but had gone well.

During a break, Steinwachs surprised Rivas with a gift. "My dad made this," she told him, beaming and handing him a tan-and-blue piece of paper, folded in rectangles. "I think you’ll like it."

Like a piece of art by Escher, it appeared to have no beginning or end.

Steinwachs was having a little fun with her old friend, an engineer and mathematician. He was delighted and a little awestruck at the little creation's beauty.
At the end of the day, Rivas started cleaning up. He set the origami-like art on top of a built-in bookshelf in the room. But as he moved his mountain of reference materials, he accidentally pushed the piece off and back behind the shelf. It was lost.

When Steinwachs found out, she felt bad for Rivas. "I'll have to make sure Dad makes you another one," she told him.

A short time later, she headed to Florida to rejuvenate. While she was there, she sent Rivas an email with a pair of photos. In one, seagulls seemed to float effortlessly in front of an orange sunset. In the other, storm clouds gathered over white-breaking waves.

Steinwachs said the photos didn’t take more than a minute to send, but they told Rivas she was thinking of him. It was a second chance to make a friend happy.

*Supervising editor is Elizabeth Brixey.*
Charter schools want flexibility in pensions

April 14, 2013 12:15 am • Christian Gooden • cgooden@post-dispatch.com By ELISA CROUCH ecrouch@post-dispatch.com 314-340-8119

ST. LOUIS • Grand Center Arts Academy needed a reading teacher.

So Principal Lynne Glickert began recruiting a candidate from St. Louis County, a teacher whom she calls “amazing.”

But the teacher turned the job down. The reason: To work at Grand Center Arts Academy, a charter school, she’d have to switch to the city teachers’ pension system.

“I wish they had a choice,” said Glickert, who has run into this predicament before. “For her, it’s about the retirement.”

When the Missouri Legislature authorized charter schools in St. Louis in 1998, it freed them from many of the constraints that bind traditional school districts.

But one remained. Missouri charter schools — tuition-free independent public schools funded by taxes — cannot choose their own retirement plans. They are tethered to the pension plans of the St. Louis and Kansas City school districts, with the intent of protecting the retirement of thousands of city school teachers.

That raises concerns from some charter school leaders in St. Louis who say the requirement not only has hurt recruitment, but has saddled them with the legacy costs of a pension system that is becoming increasingly difficult for them and St. Louis Public Schools to maintain.

As charter schools grow in number and size, so do their contributions to the St. Louis Public School Retirement System. Yet neither charter schools nor their teachers have any representation on the pension system’s Board of Trustees, giving them no voice in how the money is invested.

Some charter school leaders point out that most of their staffs will never even draw a pension. Teachers at charter schools tend to be younger, work for less pay, and switch jobs at a much faster rate than those at St. Louis Public Schools. Based on historical data, half of teachers at charter schools will leave after one year, according to the pension system’s annual report. Just one out of three will remain in the system after three years. Becoming vested requires five years of employment.
"You're transferring pension wealth from the charter schools to the public schools when you've got a situation like this," said Mike Podgursky, an economics professor at the University of Missouri-Columbia, who has written several studies on public pensions. "This is not a good deal for charters."

It's a point that bothers Kelly Garrett, executive director of KIPP St. Louis, whose school KIPP Inspire recruits teachers from across the region and out of state. This year, the school is required to contribute just over 15 percent of its salaries toward teacher pensions — an increase from about 11 percent last year. The difference is around $60,000.

"I think, wow, there's so much money being put toward their retirement that they'll never have access to," Garrett said. "It's taking money away from kids. It's not even giving money to teachers."

Garrett said he'd rather offer teachers at KIPP a 401(k) plan with a hefty match from the school that staff could take with them whenever they leave, or even offer them higher salaries. In the city plan, teachers may cash out the money they've contributed after leaving the school, but they cannot cash out their employer's contribution.

"I'd have a lot of flexibility if I did not have to participate," Garrett said.

But not everyone is upset enough to push for a change, said Doug Thaman, executive director of the Missouri Public Charter School Association.

"There are a lot of different perspectives to this," he said. "There are some who say we would really like to select our retirement system. We have others who say we don't want to hurt everybody else's retirement. How to unravel that hasn't been an easy solution."

**LOST PENSION WEALTH**

The Public School Retirement System of the City of St. Louis is made up of more than 11,000 current and former employees from the city school system and charter schools. The Missouri Legislature created the system in 1944, as well as a similar one in Kansas City. Two years later, it created the Public School Retirement System for educators everywhere else in the state.

The pension systems have different contribution and retirement requirements. In St. Louis, educators pay 5 percent of their salaries into the fund, and employers pay whatever else is needed. They do not receive a cost of living adjustment upon retirement unless the governing board of St. Louis Public Schools approves it. City teachers also pay into Social Security.

Elsewhere in Missouri, teachers pay 14.5 percent of their salaries toward retirement and do not pay Social Security. Their pensions are adjusted each year according to the Consumer Price Index.

Switching between these retirement systems can be costly for teachers, leading to a later retirement age. As a result, it has the potential of costing them hundreds of thousands of dollars in pension wealth, according to a study co-authored by Podgursky and Robert Costrell, a professor of education reform and economics at the University of Arkansas.
When it comes to recruiting talented teachers from outside St. Louis, “It’s one of the biggest obstacles,” said Thaman, of the Missouri Public Charter School Association. “If you start separating your retirements out... it reduces the amount you retire on.”

NO EASY SOLUTION

Missouri’s situation is not unique. In the 40 states with charter schools, 24 require them to participate in a particular pension plan, according to the Fordham Institute. In the other states, charters have the option of participating.

“The best scenario is that we’d have the same pension plan as the rest of the state,” said Jeff Kuntze, chief financial and operating officer for Confluence Academies, which operates five charter schools in the city, including Grand Center Arts Academy.

Thaman said there have been discussions among charter school leaders to push for legislation that would give charter schools greater flexibility. But not every charter school organizer agrees, he said. And so far, no bill has been proposed.

Twenty-one charter schools across the city educate about 9,200 students, about one-third the number enrolled in St. Louis Public Schools. Payments from charter schools into the pension system accounted for just 4 percent of employer contributions in 2007. That share rose to 16 percent in 2011, according to the most recent numbers available.

“It’s nothing to sneeze at,” said Andrew Clark, executive director of the pension system. “They’re becoming more significant.”

And this is why Julie Frugo, head of school at St. Louis Charter School, wants representation on the system’s 11-member Board of Trustees.

“We need to have a voice in the planning piece,” she said.

Five trustees are elected by teachers paying into the system, two are elected by retirees, and four are appointed by the governing board for the St. Louis school district.

Neither Charter schools nor charter school employees are guaranteed a spot on the board, but they could run for election.

In 2010, Janice Denigan, the director of finance and operations for St. Louis Charter School, ran for a spot. She lost.

She predicts the outcome would be the same for most charter school representatives, who remain a minority in the pension system.

“We know it would be more difficult to elect anyone,” she said.
Columbia residents shave heads to aid fight against childhood cancer

Saturday, April 13, 2013 | 10:17 p.m. CDT; updated 11:32 p.m. CDT, Saturday, April 13, 2013

Volunteers for the St. Baldrick's Foundation let hair stylists shave their heads on Saturday to raise money for child cancer research.

BY Miguel Sola

COLUMBIA — Although people were shouting and taking pictures all around her, Jennifer Lawson’s face conveyed concentrated calm. She was going bald for a good cause: to conquer childhood cancer.

Lawson is a pediatric therapist at MU’s Children's Hospital. “We lost a lot of our kids last year. I am doing this in their honor,” she said.

“To me, it is just hair. Bald is beautiful. I am gonna rock it,” Lawson said.

About 60 people had their heads shaved Saturday at Mojo’s to raise funds for childhood cancer research.

“Cancer is the number one cause of children deaths by disease,” Drew Shinneman, event organizer and a fourth-year medical student, said. “We lose our hair as a solidarity gesture to show people that we care.”

Billy McKinley, 39, had his head shaved for the first time. “I will let it grow for next year,” he said.

Thomas Loew, director of pediatric oncology at MU’s Children's Hospital, dressed up in a muscle suit for the occasion. “This year’s theme is stronger, like Kelly Clarkson’s song. I have the strongest patients in the planet,” he said.

Nathan Tuley and his family came from Jefferson City. His 18-month-old child, Josiah, was diagnosed with a rare brain tumor and is currently being treated with chemotherapy.

“Our child’s sickness has opened our eyes to what other families go through,” he said. “We are fortunate Josiah’s sickness has a high success rate.”
Raimond Plue, 68, grew his long white hair specifically for the occasion. He was one of the first brave ones.

The haircuts were done by professional stylists, with most of the volunteers from Pela Cura Downtown Salon.

Money raised will be given to St. Baldrick’s Foundation, the largest volunteer-driven fundraising program for childhood cancer research.

Last year, MU medical students raised more than $55,000 for the foundation, according to a news release from the organization. In its third year, the organization hopes to raise $65,000. At the beginning of the event, more than half of that total was already raised.

Since St. Baldrick’s Foundation started in 2000, events such as this one have raised more than $162 million nationwide, according to the news release.

The volunteers said they will proudly tell friends and family why they are bald. “Children are not alone in this fight,” Loew said.