Missouri advising program helps high school seniors draw road map to college

(Ran on front page of Sunday edition)

By MARÁ ROSE WILLIAMS

Corrie Mills doesn’t usually run through the halls of Central High School, waving a piece of paper over her head. But this wasn’t a usual day.

“I got a scholarship!” she blurted, out of breath, to her college adviser.

It didn’t matter that the letter was from a university the 19-year-old senior isn’t planning to attend. Just knowing that a college wanted to help pay her way was reason enough for elation, and for a race to the Missouri College Advising Corps office.

A year ago Mills, like plenty of other students in urban and rural high schools across the state, didn’t have a clue about college. She didn’t know a thing about applying for admission, much
less for scholarships. She found the whole process intimidating. She pushed the idea out of her mind.

Then she met Gerald McLemore, a graduate of Westport High School and the University of Missouri who for almost two years has worked with the Missouri College Advising Corps.

His office at Central High occupies a room that previously was the school’s candy store, and Mills had heard students praising him for helping seniors bag sweet college deals.

“Central was my rival school back in high school,” said McLemore, 24. “I see my work here as giving back to my school district.”

The Missouri College Advising Corps was launched in 2008 with a $1 million grant from the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation.

The advisers are recent college graduates who get training and set up shop in high schools with large percentages of low-income students. The advisers connect with students who have the potential to succeed in college and help them take the steps to get there.

The corps’ goal: close the college-going gap between students from low-income households and those from middle- and upper-income homes.

The National College Advising Corps now has 18 corps in 14 states. This school year, the national corps counted advisers serving 368 high schools.

Missouri’s corps has 25 advisers serving 26 high schools in Kansas City, St. Louis and rural south-central Missouri. Last year, advisers helped graduates win $16 million in scholarships.

The program, which spends $45,000 a year for each adviser, gets support from about a dozen private foundations, including the H&R Block, William T. Kemper, Kauffman, Sprint and Greater Kansas City Community foundations.

In Kansas City, the corps has advisers in 11 high schools in the Kansas City, Grandview, Raytown, North Kansas City, Hickman Mills and Independence districts.

“This truly is a solution to the challenge of helping our young people attain an education that will lead to personal success, economic development and innovation,” said Beth Tankersley-Bankhead, director of the Missouri corps.

That challenge gained urgency in 2010 when Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon, following President Barack Obama’s lead, called on state education leaders to increase the percentage of adults with some college from 37 percent to 60 percent by 2025.
The National Bureau of Economic Research last month released a report that found “the vast majority of very high-achieving students who are low income do not apply to any selective college or university.”

The report said that if those students did apply, the selective schools would most often pay their cost through scholarships.

“Moreover, high-achieving, low-income students who do apply to selective institutions are admitted and graduate at high rates,” the report said.

Developing a culture

No one in Adrianna Reyes’ Kansas City home could tell her what it’s like to go to college — or how to pay the bills.

“I didn’t know I needed so much money to pay for college,” she said.

McLemore did. He helped Reyes apply for an all-tuition-paid ticket to Donnelly College in Kansas City, Kan.

“For a lot of students, you have to hold their hand through the process because the college-going experience is so new to them,” he said. “They are not having the conversation at home. If the parent doesn’t know, how can they inform the student?”

The impact on the students guided by corps advisers has been dramatic.

The average college-going rate in the last three years from all Missouri high schools has increased less than 1 percent. From schools with Missouri corps advisers: up more than 10 percent.

Since the fall, when Mills first poked her head into McLemore’s office, she has stopped by seeking his help with college plans nearly every day.

“Before I met Mr. McLemore, I really wasn’t thinking about college,” Mills said. “I think it did change the course of my life.”

She is pretty set on attending the University of Central Missouri in Warrensburg, one of four schools that have accepted her.

Since McLemore opened his office at Central High, its students’ college-going rate has increased by more than 6 percentage points.

He has covered the cafeteria wall outside his office with college acceptance letters that his 2013 seniors have received.
“Every student passes through here every day,” McLemore said. “I want them all to see that our seniors are going off to college and they can, too. That’s what developing a college-going culture is about.”
MU gets $2 million grant for sustainability research from rental car company’s foundation

COLUMBIA, Mo. — A St. Louis-based rental car company has announced a $2 million gift to the University of Missouri.

The donation from Enterprise Holdings Foundation, the philanthropic arm of St. Louis-based Enterprise car-rental company, will fund research related to biofuels, biomass and energy efficiency.

Missouri Chancellor Brady Deaton said the money will be used to create an endowment “to support the work of our sustainable energy initiative,” a core component of the Mizzou Advantage effort to promote cross-disciplinary collaboration.

“We are truly looking toward this fundamental aspect of sustainability globally in all that we are doing,” Deaton said.

Enterprise Holdings, which owns Enterprise Rent-A-Car, National Car Rental and Alamo Rent A Car brands, was founded in 1957 by St. Louis native Jack Taylor. He named the company after the USS Enterprise aircraft carrier, which Taylor served on during World War II.

The company has more than 74,000 employees, and more than 600 of those, including several senior executives, are Missouri alumni.

Carolyn Kindle, executive director of Enterprise Holdings Foundations, said the company's ability to provide support to institutions and efforts that matter have increased as the company has grown.

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MU Faculty Council calls for nuclear engineering audit

By Karyn Spory

Friday, April 26, 2013 at 2:00 pm

The University of Missouri Faculty Council is asking Chancellor Brady Deaton to restore MU's Nuclear Science Engineering Institute to its status before its closure was announced in March 2012 and to conduct an audit of the program — something council members say should have been done before the decision to close it.

The resolution from the Faculty Affairs Committee — presented by math Professor Stephen Montgomery-Smith — says the purpose of a program audit is to "determine if a selected degree program or academic unit should be modified, consolidated with another degree program and/or academic unit, suspended, or discontinued" as defined by the university's Collective Rules and Regulations.

The resolution also calls for an audit to be performed on the nuclear engineering program.

Montgomery-Smith said NSEI must be restored for a proper audit to be conducted. NSEI is a program that 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 decision is not saying NSEI should not be part of" the College of Engineering, he said. "It's saying we should wait for an audit to be completed before we make such a decision."

During an audit, the assigned committee examines:

- Quality of faculty and students.
- Outcomes of instruction, research and outreach activities.
- Student demand and state need for the programs.
- Centrality to the mission of the campus and the university.
- Comparative advantages or uniqueness of the program.
- Adequacy of resources to support the program and other financial considerations.

Vice Provost Ken Dean said the faculty resolution was based on one sentence from the Collective Rules and Regulations that outlines the audit's purpose but does not specify when one must occur. "There is a process for determining what programs will be audited," Dean said.
The Collective Rules and Regulations say the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs will generate a list of programs to potentially be audited based on factors such as academic costs and revenue, enrollment trends and degree completion rates, and that list is then submitted to the chancellor. The chancellor ultimately decides which programs are audited.

"I think this motion misses the point. ... This is an administrative change that has occurred," Dean said, referring to nuclear engineering's move from being operated under the Graduate School to the College of Engineering.

Dean added that the chancellor responded to an earlier motion from the Faculty Council regarding NSEI by reopening admissions to the nuclear engineering graduate programs and making sure the curriculum wasn't changed over the next five years.

Another resolution called for an analysis of administrative decisions regarding NSEI since fall 2011, but that resolution was tabled until the next meeting because it didn't name a specific group to perform the audit.

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If the corner store collects taxes, eBay should too

April 28, 2013 12:15 am • By DAVID NICKLAUS dnicklaus@post-dispatch.com 314-340-8213

The debate in Washington over taxing Internet sales should be about one thing: fairness.

If you buy a book or a blouse at a physical store, you pay sales tax. If you don’t pay the same tax at an online store, the government is favoring one kind of business over another. That’s not only unfair, it’s also bad for the economy.

As the U.S. Senate takes up the Marketplace Fairness Act, however, many people are trying to confuse the issue. You’ll hear Internet companies such as eBay talking about how this is really about big-box stores trying to punish small businesses that sell online.

Some Republicans, meanwhile, take the position that the bill amounts to a tax increase, something they’ve pledged to oppose.

That’s misguided. If the IRS hires more agents to beef up enforcement, it might bring in more revenue but it wouldn’t be raising taxes. It would simply be collecting what’s already owed.

The same applies to Internet sales. Most states have a use tax, which online shoppers are supposed to calculate and pay once a year. Hardly anyone pays, and states have no way to enforce it.

(In Missouri, the Legislature is trying to make sure there’s no overall tax increase. Both houses have voted, as part of bigger tax bills, to cut the state’s income tax by an additional one-third of a percentage point if the Marketplace Fairness Act passes.)

Ebay says collecting sales taxes would be burdensome, but the Senate bill addresses that complaint. It exempts any business with remote sales of $1 million or less, and requires states to provide free software for calculating the tax. It also shields sellers from liability for any errors caused by the software.

Alan Viard, a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, thinks the bill’s authors have done plenty to ease the compliance burden.

“If you’re selling a million dollars’ worth of goods online, you ought to be able to use software to comply,” he says. “It’s paradoxical that people who make their living selling over the Internet say, ‘Gee, it’s so complicated to deal with computer software to do this.’”

Online firms raise another red herring when they say that, unlike brick-and-mortar stores, they don’t consume any local services. The sales tax is levied on citizens, not stores, and citizens consume local services even if they do all their shopping from the comfort of home.

The fairness issue has been around since at least 1992, when the Supreme Court ruled that retailers didn’t have to collect sales tax, except in states where they had a physical presence. That was always an arbitrary
rule, but the money wasn’t huge when long-distance shopping involved printed catalogs and toll-free phone numbers.

**Now, in the era of online shopping, estimates of lost state and local revenue range from $11 billion to $23 billion. Missouri misses out on collecting $480 million a year, according to a University of Missouri study.**

At a time when many state and local governments are strapped for cash, the money alone is a compelling reason to reconsider the tax status of Internet sales.

However, contrary to what some anti-tax Republicans are saying, it isn’t the only reason or even the best reason. Fairness requires that we treat big Internet retailers the same way we treat a mom-and-pop corner store. Nobody likes collecting (or paying) taxes, but that’s precisely why everyone needs to share the pain.
JEFFERSON CITY — The Missouri Senate is considering a bill to toughen attendance requirements for students receiving state-sponsored college scholarships in an effort to encourage them to graduate on time.

Students would have to be continuously enrolled for a certain number of credit hours each semester to continue receiving state aid. The legislation would require the recipients of three Missouri scholarship programs — Bright Flight, Access Missouri and the A+ Schools Program — to finish their degrees on time or potentially lose their state aid.

"The longer students stay in school the more likely they are to drop out and the more likely they are to increase their student debt. Time is the enemy here," said sponsoring Sen. David Pearce, R-Warrensburg.

The legislation would require students in the A+ program to complete 48 credit hours over two years to remain eligible for aid. The A+ program awards students from participating high schools a scholarship to cover tuition costs at public community colleges and technical schools.

Starting in the 2014-2015 academic year, recipients of Access Missouri would need to be enrolled in 24 hours of classes their first year and 30 hours in subsequent years to maintain eligibility. Access Missouri is a need-based scholarship for full-time Missouri college students to attend a four-year public or private institution. A similar requirement would be established for Bright Flight scholarship recipients.

The bill would also reduce the total number of semesters a student could qualify for state aid from Access Missouri. Currently, students can draw down aid for 10 semesters of college, but the legislation would lower that to eight.
"This would be a step in the wrong direction if we are truly trying to meet our state goals of increasing college attendance," said Sen. Wayne Wallingford, R-Cape Girardeau.

Wallingford opposed that part of the bill and added that many students take five years or longer to complete a college degree. He tried on the Senate floor to remove that provision, but the effort failed. Another amendment was adopted to allow students on all three scholarship programs to seek waivers from the new attendance requirements for "serious and unusual personal circumstances." There are also exemptions for military members, students with disabilities and students working in state or federal government.

The measure has already received first-round approval and the Senate is expected to send it to the House next week. With only three weeks left in the legislative session, the measure's chances are hurt by a lack of time, but Pearce said he is still optimistic about it passing.