The University of Missouri System is putting together a task force to evaluate its employee benefit packages.

The UM Board of Curators had a meeting yesterday via videoconference to discuss the rising costs of benefits. Betsy Rodriguez, vice president for human resources, said the system spends almost $300 million a year on the total benefits package, not including what employees spend as part of their contribution.

"We believe that total rewards package is an important part to attracting and retaining people," she said.

Almost half of the $300 million cost is for medical benefits, and 34 percent is for retirement, which includes the annual contribution as well as the amount that goes into the stabilization fund.

"The costs have grown from 15 percent of payroll to a 27.5 percent rate for next year," said Nikki Krawitz, vice president for finance and administration. She noted that those rates did not include the Federal Insurance Contributions Act tax, at 7.65 percent. If FICA is included, total employer costs increase from almost 23 percent of payroll in 2003 to more than 35 percent by next year.

Krawitz said the system is projecting a flat rate of 34 percent by 2018.

"Every 1 percent increase in the flat rate equals $10 million in benefits costs increase," she said.

The two biggest drivers of benefit costs are medical and retirement. The retirement plan has two main sources of funding: contributions from the university and employees; and the investment return.

Howard Rog, senior vice president and actuary from the Segal Co., discussed the assumptions that go into the investment returns.
The system assumes an investment return on the retirement plan of 8 percent, but Rog advised the board to reduce that assumption to 7.75 percent. Lowering the assumption would cost the system an additional $6.3 million annually.

Rodriguez said the system has a rough contribution of around $100 million annually to the retirement plan.

"Our costs are continuing to rise at levels of great concern for us and could put pressure on some other parts of our mission," Rodriguez said. "The question is: What do we want to try to do about that?"

Curators Chairman Wayne Goode of St. Louis said as the task force looks at the rising costs to the university, it also needs to look at how the UM System shares costs with employees.

The task force will report back to the curators in June and eventually make a recommendation on how to handle the rising costs.
Missouri lawmakers advance budget proposal

By Elizabeth Crisp ecrisp@post-dispatch.com 573-635-6178

JEFFERSON CITY • Missouri lawmakers are expected to vote this week on a nearly $25 billion budget proposal that will provide millions more for public education in the coming year.

But the proposed spending plan also places significant pressure on the state agency that oversees driver's licenses in an attempt to resolve the ongoing controversy over the handling of private information.

The Legislature has until Friday to adopt a state budget for the fiscal year that begins July 1. The proposal still needs another round of approval in the state House and Senate, but leaders from both say they expect to meet that deadline.

An agreement House and Senate negotiators reached on Tuesday represents a stark contrast from recent years in which lawmakers – facing budget constraints - had to consider cuts to programs.

“This is the first year we haven’t really had to do that,” said Senate Appropriations Chair Kurt Schaefer, R-Columbia.

State revenues are outpacing expectations for the year, prompting lawmakers to fast-track legislation that would spend $121 million of the state's anticipated surplus on facility improvements at the Missouri Capitol, the state mental hospital at Fulton, state parks and other projects.

Under the budget outlined Tuesday, the K-12 education foundation formula – the basic aid for elementary and secondary schools – would get a $65.8 million boost from the current fiscal year. Missouri's public colleges and universities would get several million more, distributed through a performance funding model.

Additionally, the budget plan includes $10 million for the expansion of the University of Missouri-Columbia Medical School.

Despite a big push from Democrats, including Gov. Jay Nixon, lawmakers have not approved federal funding to expand Missouri’s Medicaid program under an optional provision of the federal Affordable Care Act. Republicans, who say the proposal relies too heavily on federal spending, have thwarted repeated attempts to get the money approved this session.

“I’m still disappointed,” said Sen. Kiki Curls, D-Kansas City. "I think it’s something that would have been beneficial to the state."

But there appear to be few other areas of discord in this year's budget.
Lawmakers hashed out many of their differences before holding the first public meeting between House and Senate negotiators on Tuesday.

The latest budget proposal cuts spending by a third for the state Department of Revenue's motor licensing bureau — a move that lawmakers say is intended to send a message in the ongoing controversy over the state's new driver's license system.

Last fall, the Revenue Department adopted a policy of making electronic copies of identifying documents when Missourians apply for driver's licenses. Those documents include birth certificates, marriage licenses and - until a recent policy change - concealed weapons permits.

Republicans have blasted the department, part of Nixon's administration, for what they have deemed an invasion of privacy. The documents are being retained in a state data center that some have sought to tie to the federal government.

Schaefer and others have urged the department to halt its scanning policy, but Revenue officials say it is intended to prevent fraud and make driver's licenses more secure.

Schaefer said the budget plan provides funding for driver's licenses for eight months, and lawmakers plan to review the agency again when they return for the 2014 session in January.

"It's the funding they asked for, but only at eight months," he said. "We'll come back and evaluate that and what they're doing."

House Budget Chair Rick Stream, R-Kirkwood, said the department needs to stop scanning documents related to driver's licenses if it wants to receive the rest of its funding.

"I think that's the major issue," he said. "I think they understand what our intentions are."

Department of Revenue spokesman Ted Farnen said officials are reviewing the budget recommendation before deciding how the agency will proceed.

Lawmakers also cut travel budgets for many state agencies, but Schaefer said the new figures should not harm the departments because they were based on actual travel spending in recent years.

"We looked at their requests versus what's actually being spent," Schaefer said.

Schaefer said the budget proposal is balanced and it's at least $500,000 below what Nixon had proposed in his spending plan earlier this year.

But the numbers do rely on the passage of legislation that would eliminate a tax credit for seniors who rent their homes.

Nixon included $56 million from the elimination of the so-called "circuit breaker" credit program in his budget proposal, but he has recently signaled that he won't support the bill unless it's part of a broader tax credit overhaul that he has pushed.
"I would hope the governor wouldn’t veto it because it was in his budget," Schaefer said. “This is a request that he made for $56 million...he was prepared to spend that money.”

With less than two weeks left in the session, the circuit breaker bill hasn’t yet passed the House, but Stream said he’s confident it will.

“Until two weeks ago, the governor was behind it 100 percent,” Stream said.

The budget plan also relies on funding from pending legislation that would create a tax amnesty program.

“I’m still confident that it’s going to pass,” Schaefer said.
University of Missouri researcher develops smart phone tool for tractor rollovers

COLUMBIA, Missouri — Cell-phone toting farmers caught in dangerous tractor rollovers may soon be able to more easily signal for help thanks to a new smart phone application in development at the University of Missouri.

The app uses GPS sensors to detect rollovers. The program then sends automatic email and phone alerts with the accident coordinates to an emergency contact.

The Vehicle Rollover Prevention Education Training Emergency Reporting System was developed by Bulent Koc, an assistant professor of agricultural systems management.

The National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health says that tractor rollovers are the leading cause of death among farmers, killing 250 people each year.

Koc says he hopes to also apply the reporting system on other vehicles such construction rigs, snowmobiles and military equipment.
Arvarh Strickland vigil shows his lasting legacy

Students remember professor's example

By Karyn Spory

Tuesday, May 7, 2013 at 2:00 pm

It was a struggle to keep the candles lit Monday night as a soft breeze swept through the University of Missouri while students, faculty and staff held a candlelight vigil for Arvarh Strickland.

However, Kaylan Holloway, executive director of iGUIDE, said the flickering lights were the perfect example of the struggle Strickland encountered as the first tenured black professor at MU.

"When this campus was filled with segregation, racism and little to no diversity, Dr. Strickland was that candle," the MU senior said.

Holloway added that Strickland started a fire for justice, peace, equal opportunity and love — a fire known today as One Mizzou.

Strickland, who died April 30, began his tenure at MU in 1969 and worked throughout his career to increase the number of black faculty. He helped establish the university's Black Studies program before retiring in 1996. Last night's vigil was held outside Strickland Hall, the general classroom building that was renamed for the professor in 2007.

Legion of Black Collegians President Marnae Chavers said she first learned of Strickland during her freshman year when she had a meeting in the Strickland Room in Memorial Union. The room was named for Strickland in honor of his retirement in 1996.

Chavers said that after looking him up on Google and learning about his work at MU, academically and for the community, she gained a great respect and appreciation for every black student, faculty and staff member on campus.

"He's someone I look up to even though I never had a chance to meet him," Chavers said.
Thomas Stovall, president of iGUIDE, a group that assists first-year students with adapting to college, said although he never had the privilege of meeting Strickland, he still feels like a part of his legacy. "I am among the many students that walk in and out of the Strickland building every day," Stovall said. "I am among the many students who have the privilege of taking" part in the Black Studies program.

Strickland's widow, Willie Pearl Strickland, said she was honored that so many students — many of whom never had the chance to meet the professor — came out to celebrate his life. "I'm in awe to know that" the students "thought that much about him," she said.

"Just knowing that the students, immediately after hearing about his passing, wanted to do something to honor him — that showed real dedication to his legacy," Chancellor Brady Deaton said.

This article was published in the Tuesday, May 7, 2013 edition of the Columbia Daily Tribune with the headline "A LASTING LEGACY: Students remember professor's example."

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Posted in Education on Tuesday, May 7, 2013 2:00 pm.
Haith concerned bank records were viewed

By Steve Walentik

Tuesday, May 7, 2013 at 2:00 pm

A court petition filed yesterday is seeking to determine if bank records from Missouri Coach Frank Haith's business account were accessed improperly during the NCAA investigation of the University of Miami.

One of Haith's attorneys, Michael Buckner, is requesting the ability to issue subpoenas so he can examine documents from Bank of America's custodian of records and other bank employees to determine if Haith's account was breached between Oct. 1, 2011, and Oct. 31, 2012.

The petition, first reported by CBS-Sports.com, was filed in the Southern District of Florida federal court. Bank of America is expected to be served with it this week. It will be up to a judge to determine if there will be a hearing on the merits of the petition and then rule if Haith and his company — Frank Haith Enterprises Inc. — can issue the subpoenas.

Haith became concerned about a possible breach to the account in late October.

He had already turned over bank statements with images of checks to NCAA investigators as part of their ongoing investigation into allegations made by former Miami booster Nevin Shapiro. The petition states that during a second interview with investigators on Oct. 22, they suggested, citing sources that they did not identify, that microfiche reproductions of checks were available and requested he turn those over, as well.

Buckner said Haith's wife, Pamela, who also has access to the account, called Bank of America on Oct. 24 to inquire about the microfiche copies and was told by a bank employee that they had already been viewed or ordered.

"It was a little suspicious on Oct. 22, but with the bank employee telling her that, then that really raised a red flag," Buckner said in a phone interview yesterday.

Bank of America was said to have ordered an investigation into the possible breach, but Buckner said that Frank and Pamela Haith, as well as members of his legal team, haven't received answers about the results of that investigation.
"We've talked to various offices at the bank including the general counsel's office, and they've either stonewalled us, not provided us information or they've told us we won't be able to give everything over until we have a court order," Buckner said.

The Rule 27 petition filed yesterday alleges that Bank of America failed to conduct a thorough investigation into the breach and it "may have permitted or allowed an unknown person or persons to gain access to, or to acquire, non-public information into the Checking Account without authorization." It also said the bank's unwillingness to share information with the Haiths "is an attempt to conceal the illicit act."

Copies of three cashed checks drawn on Frank Haith Enterprises — each for $3,200 — made out to his former Miami assistants were included as exhibits in the petition.

Rule 27 petitions are used in cases where the party has not filed a lawsuit but plans to seek testimony and gather evidence at a later time.

Haith's attorneys are currently preparing his defense against charges of failure to promote an atmosphere of compliance and failure to monitor the activities of his staff in a hearing before the NCAA's Committee on Infractions. The hearing is scheduled for June 14-16 at NCAA headquarters in Indianapolis.

Buckner said they do not have time to simultaneously prepare a lawsuit against Bank of America. They want to ensure that potential evidence that could pertain to a future lawsuit is not destroyed.

"This position does not involve the NCAA. This is against Bank of America ... We don't have any evidence that anyone outside the bank was involved or received illicit information," he said.

Buckner added: "The purpose of this petition is to preserve Coach Haith's legal rights and to find out when my client's wife had the conversation with the bank employee in late October, was what that person told my client's wife true? Was there a breach? If there was a breach, who was involved? Then, thirdly, what was done with the information? If we find out that that information was disclosed to some people or a party outside the bank, we will also sue that party."

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Posted in Mu Basketball on Tuesday, May 7, 2013 2:00 pm.
MU baseball player arrested after incident

By THE TRIBUNE'S STAFF

Tuesday, May 7, 2013 at 2:00 pm

University of Missouri police believe a senior Missouri baseball player arrested on Monday night for assault and burglary tossed a rock through a door of the Reynolds Alumni Center and vandalized property.

Police arrested Gavin T. Stark, 22, on suspicion of second-degree assault, first-degree burglary, two counts of first-degree property damage and resisting arrest. He remained in the Boone County Jail today with a $22,500 bond.

A transfer from Fort Scott Community College who is a reserve first baseman and third baseman, Stark has been suspended from the team indefinitely per athletic department policy for anyone accused of a felony, MU Coach Tim Jamieson said.

Around 11:30 p.m., MU police officers responded to the alumni center, 700 Conley Ave., where they found a male victim, said Cpt. Brian Weimer. According to police, Stark approached the victim, who was unknown to Stark, outside the alumni center and threw his laptop computer to the ground.

The computer struck the concrete sidewalk, and Stark allegedly began to assault the victim by throwing punches, Weimer said.

The victim left the area, but Stark was seen throwing a large rock through a glass door of the alumni center and entered. Inside, Stark damaged lamps, chairs, tables and items set up for an event scheduled for today, Weimer said. When officers arrived, Stark first took a fighting stance but fled on foot. He was taken into custody after a short pursuit.

Police believe Stark was intoxicated at the time. A damage estimate was not available this morning, Weimer said. Police are unaware of Stark's motive.

Stark, a Lee's Summit native, has played sparingly this year, appearing in 13 games and starting four. He is hitting .091.

Jamieson said this morning he had not yet spoken to Stark about the arrest.
"It's very much out of character," Jamieson said. "It's more concerning about why and how this is going to affect his life than anything about baseball."

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Posted in Mu on Tuesday, May 7, 2013 2:00 pm.
Missouri baseball player Gavin Stark charged with burglary, resisting arrest

By Alex M. Silverman
May 7, 2013 | 5:59 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Police arrested Missouri baseball player Gavin Stark early Tuesday morning in connection with an incident of vandalism at the Reynolds Alumni Center at MU.

Stark, the senior infielder from Lee's Summit, was charged with second-degree burglary and resisting arrest by creating a substantial risk of serious injury or death — both felonies — court records show.

Capt. Brian Weimer of the MU Police Department said another individual told police that Stark approached him on the MU campus and threw his laptop to the ground. Stark then attempted to throw several punches at the victim, none of which made contact, and then retrieved a large rock, which he used to threaten the victim, Weimer said.

After running to safety, the victim saw Stark heave the rock through a glass-pane door at the Reynolds Alumni Center, Weimer said. Stark then entered the building and broke lamps, lamp shades, tables and coffee cups that were set up for an event scheduled for Tuesday, Weimer said.

Weimer said police received a call about 11:30 p.m. Monday regarding an act of vandalism in progress. When police arrived, he said, Stark "assumed a fighting stance and started yelling profanities at the officers." Police apprehended Stark only after he refused to obey officers' commands and attempted to flee the scene, Weimer said. Police believe Stark was intoxicated when the incident occurred.

Boarded-up windows could be seen Tuesday at the Reynolds Alumni Center.

Missouri has suspended Stark indefinitely and spokesman Shawn Davis said the athletics department is still gathering details about the event. Stark, who started 17 games at first base as a junior for Missouri in 2012, has started four games this season.
MU baseball player Gavin Stark arrested

COLUMBIA — Missouri baseball player Gavin Stark was arrested Monday night on suspicion of second-degree assault, felony resisting arrest, first-degree property damage and first-degree burglary.

Stark, whose bond was set at $22,500, has been suspended indefinitely, per university policy regarding any player expected to be charged with a felony.

“We are aware of the situation involving Gavin Stark and we’re trying to do our best to get details about what happened,” Missouri coach Tim Jamieson said in a statement.

Stark, a senior first baseman/third baseman who graduated from Lee’s Summit North, joined Missouri last season after playing for Fort Scott Community College. He is hitting .091 in 13 games this season for the Tigers, who are 15-28.
Stark arrested on five counts and held on $22,500 bail

Missouri baseball infielder senior Gavin Stark was arrested Monday night on charges of second-degree assault, first-degree burglary, two counts of first-degree property damage and resisting arrest.

Stark was suspected of vandalizing the Reynolds Alumni Center when MU police officers found him just after 11:30 p.m., spokesman Brian Weimer said.

"We made contact with Stark, and he assumed a fighting position with our officers then attempted to run away," Weimer said. "His fists were up and he was yelling profanity at the officers."

He was arrested a short distance away after a brief pursuit.

"Police believe he was intoxicated at the time," Weimer said.

Before police were alerted to a disturbance in the area, Weimer said Stark assaulted a male who was seated nearby and using a laptop computer.

"Mr. Stark then grabbed his laptop computer and threw it to the ground," Weimer said. "When he was confronted by the victim of the assault, he started swinging at him but was not able to make contact with him."

Stark then proceeded to threaten the victim.

"He picked up a large rock and threatened to hit him with it," Weimer said.

After the victim fled the scene, Stark threw the rock through the Alumni Center doors and entered the building, where he damaged lamps, lampshades, coffee cups and other items that were in place for an event Tuesday morning.

The University Club of MU, located in the Alumni Center, declined comment, but a waiter confirmed the morning's scheduled events went on without interruption.

Team spokesman Shawn Davis said that the team is aware of the situation and is still gathering facts.

Stark is suspended indefinitely, per university policy regarding athletes who are arrested.

The 6-foot-4-inch infielder is in his second season with the Tigers baseball team and is batting .091 with one hit and two runs.

Stark was released from the Boone County Jail on $22,500 bond at 2:19 p.m. Tuesday.
Residents are happy to be near MKT trail, MU survey shows

By Sam Gause
May 7, 2013 | 8:05 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Columbia's outdoor recreational footprint is marked by the MKT Nature and Fitness trail.

Twenty years ago the formation of the 8.9-mile nature walk received a lot of flack because it was to be developed near the backyards of many people.

The current trail, which offers a natural escape close to the growing city, is almost unanimously praised.

Those that live close to the MKT are pleased with the impact it has had on their community, according to a recent survey by the Parks and Recreation Department and the MU Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism.

The survey, conducted by MU assistant professor Sonja Wilhelm Stanis, took results from the responses of 149 residents that live within 200 yards of the trail. The survey asked questions about trail usage, trail satisfaction, improved resale value of home and potential issues connected to the trail.

According to the the report, the majority of respondents enjoy the trail and their relationship to it:

- 70 percent stated they were "very satisfied" and 24 percent "satisfied."
- 89 percent indicated their quality of life has improved.
- 71 percent said the trail makes their property easier to sell.
- 23 percent use the trail five to seven times a week and 47 percent use the trail one to four days a week.

Former Mayor Darwin Hindman is not surprised by the data, but he is happy MU conducted the survey. A resident of Columbia for 78 years, he has always fought for more parks and
trails in the city. In the past, he conducted surveys about various trails and got similar responses.

"Any survey that I did is going to be questioned because I'm such an advocate, but the university is much more neutral," he said.

Residents along the MKT have not always believed in its benefits. In trying to get the trail established, Hindman met a lot of doubters.

"There is a tendency for people to be afraid of trails," he said. "Afraid of the potential privacy loss, trespassing, littering, vandalism and theft."

The survey found very few incidents. Four percent of respondents reported theft and three percent reported vandalism.

David Mountjoy neighbors the MKT and frequently uses the trail for running, biking and watching wildlife. He moved to his present location 20 years ago partly because of the trail.

"People on the trail are very respectful," he said, "We've never had an incident."

Hindman hopes that this survey will change people's perception of trails.

"This survey proves their benefits are tremendous for the community," he said. "People stop me literally every day and tell me how much they love the trails."

_Supervising editor is Scott Swafford._
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

MU LGBTQ Resource Center recognizes students, organizations with Catalyst Awards

By Nick Agro
May 7, 2013 | 9:41 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — When MU graduate student Erik Hall walked up to the podium Tuesday night, almost all of the Catalyst Award winners had been announced. Only one glass trophy remained on the table.

He looked out into the audience for a moment and then began to speak about his transition to Columbia and his struggle with his true self.

“For the first time in my life, I didn’t know anyone within 200 miles,” Hall said. “I felt alone and I was wrestling with my sexuality.”

Hall told the audience of more than 60 people that he turned to a very good friend to help him grapple with self-doubt and confusion. That friend was Mackenzie Thiessen, who won one of the MU LGBTQ Resource Center’s Catalyst Awards for speaking out for social justice.

Awards were presented to nine winners Tuesday night at Stotler Lounge in Memorial Union.

“The Catalyst Awards are not a checklist, are not about titles and are not easily definable,” said Stuby Struble, MU LGBTQ resource center coordinator. “They are about us, they are about change, they are about love.”

Winners included students and organizations that have worked to promote positive conversation about LGBTQ issues on campus.

Mackenzie Thiessen was happy he won, but doesn’t need recognition to continue his work promoting social justice issues.
"As much as everybody does for me, I wish that I could do as much for them," Theissen said. "What's best is that I know I made a difference in Erik's life."

Another winner, Hassan Williams, attended the ceremony via Skype. When it was announced that he had won, his close friends, Greer Relphorde and Jeff Perkins, hoisted up a laptop to the podium so he could give his remarks.

"It's such a surprise," Williams said to the audience while placing his hands on the sides of his face. "I'm just floored."

Other winners included: the MU Athletics Department, Paul Reeves, Rev. Molly Housh Gordon, Missouri state Sen. Jolie Justus, Taylor Dukes, the MU Office of Disability Services and Emily Andsager.
The St. Louis Regional Chamber recently announced an initiative to make St. Louis smarter. The chamber wants to increase the number of college graduates in the St. Louis region. Among the top 20 largest metropolitan regions in the country, St. Louis currently ranks 14th in the percentage of adults with degrees. The chamber wants us to be in the top 10 by 2025.

That would be easily accomplished if we could do a better job in two areas. First, we have to persuade kids who come to school here to stay here after they graduate. Second, we have to persuade kids who grow up here but go away to college to come back after they graduate.

We have trouble on both counts. Why? We don’t have jobs for them.

There are other reasons, too. Some young people want the bright lights. They go to Chicago or New York. Others want mountains or oceans or warm winters.

But mostly, it’s jobs. People tend to like it here. It’s a comfortable place. It’s easy to get around. Housing is relatively inexpensive. It’s just big enough to have major league sports and top-notch cultural attractions, but not so big that you can’t find a parking space.

None of our good attributes matter if there aren’t enough suitable jobs.

Maybe in another time, this was a chicken-or-egg argument. Does a well-educated workforce attract companies, or does a vibrant economy attract educated workers?

But these days, it’s quite clear that people follow jobs rather than vice versa.

I remember visiting Novus International last year. The company is in St. Charles County. It produces supplements for animal feed. That’s more high-tech than it sounds. The company employs scientists who come from all over the world.

In other words, if you want St. Louis to be a smarter place, you need to attract jobs that require smart people.

How do we attract jobs?
I have long thought we could give the entire state a huge economic boost if we did something innovative with health care. Our national health care delivery system is inefficient, and Obamacare is, at best, a minor improvement. Even its most ardent supporters don’t pretend it’s a solution. The real work in health care is going to take place at the state level.

Why don’t we have a commission of medical professionals come up with a plan? Every doctor and nurse and hospital administrator I know has ideas on how to improve the system. Include some business people and some economists. Let them look at what works in other industrialized countries. Keep the politicians out of it.

Once the commission comes up with a plan, it could be presented to the Legislature for an up-or-down vote.

Rex Sinquefield could put something like this together. He has bought — or earned — the respect of both parties. But he’s not interested in health care. Tax reform and education are his issues.

But what about the Chamber? It represents the business community, which has a vested interest in seeing health care fixed. The business community knows how inefficient the current system is, and the problems with the uncertainty of the new rules and regulations. Also, the business community has clout with elected officials.

If we had real health care reform, we could attract businesses. Think of this message: “Don’t worry about health care. We’ve got it figured out.”

Then we’d have jobs for the kids who are graduating from all of our fine colleges and universities. We’d have jobs for the kids who have gone off to school but would love to return.

Otherwise, I am not sure what we gain by having more college graduates. For instance, the Chamber intends to work with member companies on programs to help their workers complete college. I’m sure it would provide a sense of satisfaction for people to finally get degrees. But what then? What if every employee gets a master’s degree? Everybody can’t be in management. We’d be the same as before except better educated.

That seems like a hollow victory.

I hear so many ideas for health care reform. It’s frustrating to see nothing get done. And nothing will get done as long as we leave it to politicians.

The St. Louis Regional Chamber could make a real difference.

Instead, the Chamber wants us to get smarter. That’s like asking us to get better-looking. It certainly wouldn’t hurt. It would probably be great for our self-esteem. Let’s be the best-looking people in the country by 2025. Who wouldn’t want to hire pretty women and handsome men?