McCaskill to push cuts to student loan interest rate at University of Missouri appearance

COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) --- U.S. Sen. Claire McCaskill is promoting a plan to cut interest rates on federally subsidized student loans.

The Democratic senator planned to meet Thursday afternoon with University of Missouri students in Columbia about the proposed Bank on Student Loans Fairness Act. The bill seeks to reduce the current interest rate of 3.4 percent on subsidized Stafford loans to 0.75 percent for one year.

McCaskill and her co-sponsor, Democratic Sen. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, say the lower rate is on par with a discounted, short-term rate offered to banks by the Federal Reserve.

The U.S. House voted last week in favor of variable student loan interest rates to avoid an automatic increase to 6.8 percent on July 1.
Mo. bill allows MU councils to levy taxes

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP) - Local University of Missouri Extension councils could levy property taxes under legislation being considered by Gov. Jay Nixon.

The bill would allow existing extension councils to form single or multi-county taxing districts. Councils could then ask voters in their districts to approve a property tax of no more than 30 cents per $100 of assessed valuation.

Former Stone County commissioner and extension coordinator Tony Delong says the local councils need a funding option because of tight county budgets.

Extension councils already exist in every county and are charged with bringing University of Missouri programs and research to all parts of the state. The St. Louis County council would not be able to seek a tax under the bill.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

MU Bookstore gets new name: The Mizzou Store

By Jessica Schlager
May 29, 2013 | 7:09 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — The MU Bookstore has officially changed its name to The Mizzou Store as of Wednesday.

Michelle Froese, manager for Student and Auxiliary Services, said the name change is an effort to help MU families better connect with the bookstore.

Froese said the term "university bookstore" is too generic. Although the bookstore sells books, it also sells clothing, gifts and many more items. The university wanted a name that would better reflect all its store has to offer.

"'Mizzou' is a unique identifier for the university," Froese said. "Very rarely people call it the University Bookstore. Instead, they say, 'I'm going to the Mizzou store.' In common usage, that name makes more sense."

The name change has been budgeted for since December, Froese said.

In addition to changing the name of the bookstore, the university had to change its advertisements. The store's website has been updated, and the Twitter account will be as well. As for Facebook, Froese said once a page has more than 5,000 likes, its name no longer can be changed.

Because the MU Bookstore Facebook page has more than 5,000 likes, a new page has been created. Both pages will be updated for the next few months, but the old page eventually will be deleted.

It is hoped that the new name for the bookstore will create a sense of pride and tradition, Froese said.

Recent MU graduate Megan Green said she thinks there will be only a slight difference in profit with the name change.
"I could see how the change would raise profit from the alumni and fans, but I don’t think there will be a big difference for students because they are already here," Green said. "Calling it a bookstore, people probably think it sells mostly books, but I assumed people would know that you could buy other things, too."

The Mizzou Store’s advertisements have been updated with the new name. Froese said a few smaller changes will be made later this summer to refresh the interior of the store and bring in more customers.

"We are very excited. We even consulted with our stakeholders, alumni, students, faculty and staff," Froese said. "The change makes sense."

Supervising editor is Hannah Wiese.
Vietnamese ambassador attends trade forum at MU

Vietnam-U.S. tie is highlighted.

By Karyn Spory

Wednesday, May 29, 2013 at 2:00 pm

For Nguyen Quoc Cuong, Vietnam's ambassador to the United States, on Tuesday wasn't just about trying Tiger Stripe ice cream or touring the division of plant sciences at the University of Missouri. Instead, it was about exploring trade between Mid-Missouri and Vietnam.

Yesterday, U.S. Rep. Vicky Hartzler, R-Harrisonville, was joined by Cuong and representatives from the city of Columbia for a forum on Missouri/Vietnam trade at the Reynolds Journalism Institute on the MU campus.

"We are in the business of education in Columbia," Mayor Bob McDavid said. "This is our company; this is what we do well."

McDavid said the innovation of the university leads to the development of jobs and products within Columbia.

"It is our hope the innovators in Vietnam will create a product that you will sell to us to make our lives better — we also hope the item we create here will be purchased to make the lives of your citizens better," McDavid said to Cuong during the forum. "That's what globalization is all about."

Cuong agreed.

"We have great potential for further trade and business between Columbia and Vietnam," he said.

Vietnam imports a lot of pork, beef, poultry, dairy and soybeans, which are all things Missouri produces, Cuong said. He said trade between Vietnam and Missouri last year was $100 million, "which is still small but an increase" over past years.
Cuong said the United States, Vietnam and nine other countries are negotiating the Trans-Pacific Partnership. According to the U.S. Trade Representative website, countries within the TPP represent more than 40 percent of global trade, and the United States hopes to increase exports to those regions.

Another trade item important to both Hartzler and Cuong is catfish.

Hartzler is sponsoring a bill to eliminate duplicate catfish inspection. In the 2008 Farm Bill, a second inspection program for catfish was created, leading the fish to be inspected by the Food and Drug Administration and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. "This is going to cost taxpayers $30 million to set up and at least $14 million each year to run after that," Hartzler said, calling the program wasteful.

Hartzler said in addition to eliminating the wasteful spending, she wants to get rid of this trade barrier — one felt by the Vietnamese government.

During the forum, Cuong thanked Hartzler for her leadership on the bill. "It is positively affecting trade between Vietnam and U.S.," he said, adding that catfish exports are important to Vietnam.

Before the forum, Cuong toured the MU campus, specifically the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources. "I think quite a few of good examples for Vietnam to learn from is the Life Science Business "Incubator — they have great ideas," Cuong said.

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Posted in Education on Wednesday, May 29, 2013 2:00 pm.
Mizzou targets Southeast for recruiting

7 hours ago • By Dave Matter dmatter@post-dispatch.com 314-340-8508

COLUMBIA, Mo. • Scott Blade has been the football coach at Independence High School in Thompson’s Station, Tenn., for less than four months, but he already has piles of mail marked with Columbia’s 65211 zip code.

Like hundreds of high schools across the Southeast, Blade’s program has been swamped with recruiting information from Missouri’s football team.

“Mizzou probably does the best of anybody — and I mean this — of sending out these 8-by-10 mailers where they take a look at a certain aspect of the school or athletics or a player profile or a coach’s profile,” said Blade, who spent the previous seven years coaching at two other Tennessee high schools. “They really let the recruit get a sense of the University of Missouri. And they do that better than anybody. I say that because we get letters from everywhere. There are times I don’t even have an SEC-caliber player and I’m still getting stuff (from Missouri) to educate me.”

By the time Missouri decided to leave the Big 12 for the Southeastern Conference in the fall of 2011, Gary Pinkel’s coaching staff already had analyzed where it might shift its recruiting focus should the school make the switch. MU’s initial plan was to cast its net toward Florida and Georgia, pulling some of its resources out of Texas to concentrate on traditional SEC territories. MU since has saturated the Southeast with mailers and offered scholarships by the dozens.

The results have been minimal so far. After Missouri’s 5-7 debut in the SEC, the program’s first losing season in eight years, the 2013 recruiting class included one player each from Alabama, Florida and Georgia.

Still, the Tigers continue to press on with their Southern strategy.

According to Rivals.com’s national database, Mizzou has offered 2014 scholarships to 26 players from Georgia, the most of any state, followed by Texas (23), Florida (21), Missouri (17) and Illinois (17). MU also has seven offers out to players from Tennessee and California, six in Kansas and five in Oklahoma and Ohio. Those figures aren’t always exact, but they’re a guidepost for a team’s target areas.

“Coach Pinkel has done a nice job getting down into SEC country,” said Ingle Martin, coach at Christ Presbyterian Academy in Nashville, Tenn., and a former quarterback at Florida. “For the kids, it really hits home that they’ll be able to play schools they grew up watching. Missouri’s a lot like these SEC schools, and it’s a great fit.”
Among the 10 high school seniors who have made oral commitments to MU's 2014 class, two are from Martin's team in Nashville. Thomas Richard, a wide receiver, committed last month. Offensive tackle Paul Adams followed him two weeks ago.

Missouri was the first school from a major conference to heavily recruit Richard, who didn't play high school football until his junior year. Adams already had offers from Cincinnati and Mississippi State, while Tennessee and Vanderbilt have shown recent interest, too, Martin said.

About 20 miles south of their school, Mizzou landed a commitment from Independence (Tenn.) cornerback Finis Stribling. Coaches from every SEC school except Georgia have been by Independence, Blade said, usually to discuss Vic Wharton, a four-star defensive back and receiver who's committed to Tennessee. Stribling has gained their attention, too.

"Finis has been a sleeper, but all of a sudden they meet him and see his numbers posted online and say, 'Wait a minute, let's take a look at this kid,'" Blade said. "He had a really good spring for us, but Missouri was really the first big school to throw the line out there."

Like every year, Missouri will have to find recruits beyond the state border to supplement its in-state collection. A robust class of local talent is up for grabs, with seven of the state's top 13 recruits from the St. Louis area, as rated by Rivals.com, including five from the Metro Catholic Conference: DeSmet offensive lineman Andy Bauer (No. 1), SLUH defensive back Raymond Wingo (6), Vianney running back Markel Smith (7) and CBC offensive lineman Brian Wallace (11) and defensive lineman Armon Watts (13). Another touted prospect is right across the state line in O'Fallon, Ill., defensive end Dewayne Hendrix, rated fourth in Illinois and 103rd nationally by Rivals.

Bauer and Smith were once committed to Mizzou, but Bauer backed off in the fall and has since committed to Mississippi. Smith pulled his commitment in late March but is still considering Mizzou among other schools. The other high-profile local recruits are uncommitted, including Hazelwood Central offensive lineman Roderick Johnson, considered one of the country's top tackle prospects.
Public universities in 10 states turn to Coursera's massive online courses

NO MU Mention

By JUSTIN POPE/The Associated Press
May 29, 2013 | 11:01 p.m. CDT

The movement of "massive online open courses," which began with elite universities making their courses available online to the masses, is rapidly moving into the trenches of public higher education.

On Thursday, 10 large public university systems — including the giant state systems of New York, Tennessee and Colorado and the University of Houston — intend to announce plans to incorporate MOOCs and platforms offered through for-profit Coursera into their own teaching.

The plans vary widely. Some institutions will focus on improving prep courses for students coming into the system, others on matriculated students both online and on-campus, and still others will be developing their own MOOCs to teach students at other institutions in their states. At least one system, Tennessee, plans a version of an experiment cropping up at schools around the country: having students take in-person and customized MOOC-like versions of the same course, and comparing results.

But overall, the announcement is the latest ramping up of higher education's MOOC experiment, which launched in earnest barely a year ago as a way to sample elite college courses. But it is now tangibly affecting the large public institutions that do much of the heavy lifting of American higher education. The latest batch of partners also includes West Virginia University and the Universities of Georgia, Kentucky, Nebraska and New Mexico.

"We noticed the vast majority of our students were people who already had degrees and wanted to continue their education," Coursera co-founder Daphne Koller said. "We really wanted to move the needle on fundamental educational problems" of access and affordability. Because Coursera does not produce its own content or administer degree courses, "you have to work within the framework of the institutions that are actually good at that," she said.
The announcement also shows the extent to which, for cash-strapped university leaders and policymakers, the MOOCs and the platforms they are built on offer an irresistible promise of doing more with less — to scale up education and help students move more efficiently toward a degree.

"It's been a challenge in reduced financial capacity to offer all the courses all the time that every student needs to complete a degree," said State University of New York Chancellor Nancy Zimpher. "That's what slows students down — our inability to provide degree-required courses students need at exactly the speed they want them."

Many aren't convinced, however, the trend is good for students, and the latest announcement comes as the sheer speed of the MOOC movement is raising concerns on campus. In recent weeks, faculty at Duke and Amherst have voted against elements of expanding MOOCs on their campuses, and 58 Harvard faculty last week called for a new university committee to consider ethical issues related to Harvard's participation in edX, a MOOC-producing consortium led by Harvard and MIT. Some California faculty have also protested plans in the state higher education system to use MOOCs to supplement teaching on campus.

Legislators in Florida and California are pressing to force universities to accept credit from MOOC courses, especially if students can't get into the in-person versions of the courses they need. Peter Stokes, an expert on education innovation at Northeastern University, said more such efforts will follow — likely to the alarm of some faculty.

"It almost seems to promote the notion that there is this no-cost alternative for higher education," he said. "It feeds into the fear that many public institutions have that the political solution to higher education is to continue to divest."

At SUNY, Zimpher said the giant, 64-campus system (which already has 150 online degree programs) would be working with Coursera and other providers as part of a broader effort to expand capacity of its "Open SUNY" online program by 100,000 students, potentially offering students up to one-third of their online degree programs outside SUNY.

Details on programs and courses aren't yet set, but she emphasized that any MOOC courses would be evaluated for possible credit by similar faculty mechanisms SUNY currently uses to assess traditional courses.

"We must maintain the same academic oversight and the same academic standards that have applied for decades in our residential delivery system when we employ online delivery," she said.
The University of Tennessee, meanwhile, will have faculty at its Martin and Chattanooga campuses work with Coursera to develop entirely online versions of first-year courses in English composition and masterpieces of music, both general education requirements (these courses won't be "open" to non-UT students, so aren't really "MOOCs," but they will borrow from Coursera's technology platforms). The broader state system of two- and four-year colleges governed by the Tennessee Board of Regents is also part of the agreement announced Thursday.

Tennessee will run two kinds of courses — traditional and online — side-by-side, and the results will be compared. University officials said it would be up to the campuses to work out how students would be selected and whether they would have a choice which track to take, but all would get credit.

The university has been awarded about $50,000 in start-up costs to develop the courses. Afterward, it will pay Coursera $3,000 per class and $25 per student — substantially cheaper than traditional instruction.

But it's not clear how much help students will have. In a conference call with reporters, system president Joe DiPietro and Katie High, vice president for academic affairs and student success, indicated students could send faculty e-mails and those on-campus could approach faculty with questions. If so, that raises questions about whether the technology is truly improving efficiency for faculty as much as promised.

In a world where even many on-campus students are already taking online courses, often from other institutions and transferring them, Thursday's announcements further blur the distinctions not just within universities but between them.

"Now can we find a way to interact with the University of Georgia system and perhaps exchange course content and delivery mechanisms," SUNY's Zimpher said, adding that for future students "choosing" one school or another will no longer mean sacrificing opportunities.

"That is a brave new world into which we are all entering and we want to play in that space," she said.