The University of Missouri System on Friday announced how it was distributing about $22.2 million in funding to the four campuses to assist in meeting their strategic priorities.

"Our strategic planning process was designed to enhance the plans of our campuses in their goal of retaining or enhancing best-in-class status," UM System President Tim Wolfe said in a news release. "Today's announcement is further evidence that we are now executing those plans."

The money is contingent on Gov. Jay Nixon's veto of House Bill 253 standing and the release of currently state-restricted funding, according to the news release.

The University of Missouri was awarded a total of $13.6 million, of which $10.67 million was earmarked for the School of Medicine and the College of Veterinary Medicine. The medical school will receive $9.7 million of the $10.67 million, and the vet school will get $970,000 for its large-animal program.

Weldon Webb, associate dean for rural health and dean for medical education, said the $9.7 million would be a recurring budget item and would fund the addition of 32 students per year to the School of Medicine.

Webb said the second part of the medical school expansion would include the development of a clinical campus in Springfield. That is likely to cost $35 million to $40 million to build and will likely be raised through private donors.
"With the increased class size, they would spend their first two years in Columbia, and then approximately a third of the class would go to Springfield for their third and fourth year," Webb said.

Neil Olson, dean of veterinary medicine, said the nearly $1 million would go toward helping train students to be food-animal or large-animal veterinarians. One example of how the funds would be used is expanding the teaching herd of cattle at Middlebush Farm on Highway 63. Olson said they hope to increase from 30 cows to 60.

MU spokeswoman Mary Jo Banken said the remaining $2.9 million would go toward funding campus priorities, including faculty salaries and position.

Andy Careaga, spokesman for the Missouri University of Science and Technology, said Chancellor Cheryl Schrader would give an address Sept. 9 to detail how the $3.2 million allotted to the campus would be used. The campus's plan emphasized increasing students' return on investment.

The University of Missouri-St. Louis received about $2.2 million that will be used for scholarships, strategic faculty hires and programs to increase degree completion. The University of Missouri-Kansas City received $2.6 million, and the UM System got $583,000. Representatives from UMKC could not be reached for comment.

This article was published in the Friday, August 30, 2013 edition of the Columbia Daily Tribune with the headline MU gets $13M in funding: Strategic plans garner payouts."
UM System to divvy up state funding, if tax-cut veto is upheld

By T.J. Thomson, Sky Chadde

August 30, 2013 | 8:19 p.m. CDT

University of Missouri System President Tim Wolfe on Friday announced he distribution of more than $22 million to each of the system’s four campuses. The funding is based on the campuses’ strategic priorities, which include objectives to be achieved by 2020.

COLUMBIA — The University of Missouri System plans to use $10.67 million in state funds to enroll more students at MU, expand MU’s off-campus operations, and hire more faculty and staff at two of MU's medical programs.

Another $2.94 million is earmarked for faculty salaries, said Mary Jo Banken, MU News Bureau’s executive director.
Of the $10.67 million, $9.7 million would go to the School of Medicine and $970,000 to the College of Veterinary Medicine, UM System spokesman John Fougere said.

MU’s $13.61 million is part of a larger $22,172,750 state allocation for the UM System’s four campuses to bolster strategic goals drafted by each campus this summer, according to a Friday announcement by UM System President Tim Wolfe.

Fougere said the system and campuses have been working on the strategic plans for a year and hope to publish them soon.

"Over the past year, MU, along with the other campuses, developed a specific strategy with an objective, scope and advantage supported by an action plan, funding plan, and metrics," Fougere said. "We hope to have them online shortly."

Banken said that she didn’t know how the money for faculty salaries would be distributed but that it would likely be set aside for faculty who achieve tenure status or are promoted.

Fougere added that the $2.94 million would also be used for recruitment and "training, mentoring and leadership development."

The funding is not guaranteed, however.

"That’s not a slam dunk yet," said Neil Olson, dean of the College of Veterinary Medicine, of money that would go to his school.

The more than $22 million allocated for the UM System’s strategic planning efforts hinge on whether the state legislature overturns Gov. Jay Nixon’s veto of House Bill 253. The legislature reconvenes Sept. 11 and is expected to vote on the veto of the tax-cut bill at that time, Banken said.

"Gov. Nixon vetoed Bill 253 and put a hold on part of our budget," Banken said. "If his veto stands, we will get that money."

Med school: More students
The MU School of Medicine plans to use its almost $10 million allocation for staff and faculty salaries, training materials and other educational resources, according to its website.

These funds are part of a larger plan to increase the infrastructure of the school. Because of a shortage of physicians in the state and nationally, the school wants to increase its number of students from 96 to 128, said Weldon Webb, associate dean for rural health.

To accommodate more students, the school hopes to secure about $40 million to construct new buildings and labs on campus. It also hopes to expand its partnership with two health care providers, CoxHealth and Mercy Hospital, in Springfield by creating a clinical campus there.

Roughly $35 million will be spent in Columbia and $5 million in Springfield, Webb said.

That $40 million is not yet secured, but Webb said he’s optimistic the school will get it. After obtaining the money, it will take about two years to build the infrastructure needed.

The increase in students will be gradual. If the school can obtain the required funding, August 2016 will be the first time the medical school enrolls 128 students.

**Vet school: Large animal program**

The College of Veterinary Medicine plans to use its almost $1 million allocation to support the teaching needs of the school’s large animal program, Olson said.

All veterinary students, even if they plan to work in the small-animal field, need exposure to large animals as part of their education, he said.

With this year’s funds in hand, the school would start looking to hire at least one new faculty member in the next nine to 12 months. Down the road, it would look to hire two additional teachers and two to three technicians, Olson said.

Also, the school wants to build a clinical skills lab at its 288-acre Middlebush Farm near the Columbia Regional Airport. Doubling the 30-head herd of cows is on the agenda as well, he said.
The funds would also go to replacing some old medical trucks and creating a place to house those trucks.

**Remaining funding**

The rest of the money, $8,562,750, would go to the rest of the system and the system office.

Beyond MU’s $13.61 million allocation, Wolfe also slated:

- about $3.2 to the Missouri University of Science and Technology.
- about $2.2 to the University of Missouri-St. Louis.
- about $2.6 million to the University of Missouri-Kansas City.
- $583,000 to the UM System.

Fougere said the UM System will use its allocation to enhance its employee development programs and standardize systemwide technology.

*Supervising editor is Elizabeth Brixey.*
School funding will be cut if override is successful, Nixon tells Centralia crowd

No MU mention

Voters should hold lawmakers accountable at the polls if they override a veto of a tax cut bill that is a "risky financial experiment," Gov. Jay Nixon said Thursday night.

Speaking to a gathering of about 150 at Centralia Intermediate School, Nixon called on supporters of public education to contact lawmakers and urge them to sustain his veto of a bill that he says would cut state taxes by $700 million or more.

"If they make a mistake, OK," Nixon said. "We're Missourians. If people make mistakes, we say fine, say don't do it again."

When they contact lawmakers, Nixon asked them to be respectful and explain why they oppose the bill.

"If people don't listen to you or don't agree with you, don't forget when you get the citizen honor to go inside those little booths and pull that curtain behind you and put an X beside the name."

Centralia is in the 44th House District, represented by freshman Republican Caleb Rowden, who won his seat by 320 votes. Rowden did not attend last night's meeting.

Centralia schools Superintendent Darin Ford said after the meeting that he has had "numerous conversations" with Rowden about the bill. "Caleb knows I support the governor's veto," he said.

Rowden said again yesterday that he has not decided whether he will vote to override Nixon's veto or will change his vote from May and oppose the bill.

When he was finished, Nixon had moved at least two members of the audience closer to his position. Retirees Gale and Sharon Stowers took seats near the front while waiting for the governor.
Gale Stowers said he was torn about the bill. "I'd like to see the government keep the money, but I'm afraid they'll fritter it away," he said.

Sharon Stowers said she favors lower business taxes and is disappointed that the fight is a take-it-or-leave-it situation. "I believe the two sides could have sat down and fixed the problems," she said.

After the meeting, the Stowerses said they were more inclined to oppose the bill.

The tax cut measure has become a test of whether Republicans can unite their veto-proof majorities to set state policies. Nixon has traveled relentlessly to argue that the bill's provisions are so poorly written that it is a danger to state finances.

He's doing it, Nixon said, "because this is very serious business, and I think there are some who don't understand the difference between politics and governing. Politics is the set of tactics you use for the honor of governing. Governing is a shared responsibility that you have."

Supporting Nixon's argument, he brought a top aide, Chris Pieper, and state Budget Director Linda Luebbering for an explanation of the bill's technical details. For Centralia schools, it could mean a cut of $443,000 to $768,000 from current state funding of $8.6 million, according to figures distributed to the audience.

Last night, Nixon criticized the key backer of the campaign to override his veto and alluded to the Missouri visit of Texas Gov. Rick Perry, who appeared at a Republican pep rally for the override. Wealthy activist Rex Sinquefield has contributed $2.4 million to the campaign to override Nixon's veto. Nixon did not use Sinquefield's name, but Sinquefield's influence on the override battle was a major part of Nixon's message. "Remember, all these ads and all this stuff is being funded by one guy — one guy," Nixon said.

The tax bill Nixon vetoed, House Bill 253, would make numerous changes in income and sales taxes. It would cut income tax rates in 10 steps and cut the corporate income tax rate in half in five steps. Half of business profits would be exempt from taxes. If Congress makes tax collection on Internet and catalog sales mandatory for companies, the bill would cut another 0.5 percent off the top state income tax rate.

The bill also would repeal sales tax exemptions for college textbooks and prescription drugs.

Taken together, legislative estimates put the revenue cut at almost $700 million when fully implemented. If Congress acts this year, Nixon again warned last night, the cut in income tax rates could trigger refunds for past years costing $1.2 billion by June 30, 2014.

"It is very important that everybody know that the entire state is watching this moment in history, and you just simply cannot be for House Bill 253 and for public education," Nixon said. "It is not possible."
Columbia Chamber of Commerce endorses Nixon’s tax-cut veto

By Rudi Keller

Friday, August 23, 2013 at 2:00 pm Comments (8)

MU Mention on pg 2

The Columbia Chamber of Commerce joined the opposition to a state tax-cut measure Friday, citing the bill's potential to undermine education funding and bucking the stand taken by statewide business groups.

The chamber announced its stand in a news release issued this morning. The tax cut has become the focus of an intense campaign as Gov. Jay Nixon seeks to sustain his veto of the bill. The announcement adds to the local support for Nixon's veto, which will include a Sept. 5 rally of University of Missouri students and faculty.

Lawmakers meet Sept. 11 to consider vetoed bills.

"The Columbia Chamber of Commerce is very concerned with our economy, and we strongly support anything that would help our members to be more successful," Bob Wagner, chairman of the chamber's board of directors, said in the news release. "But we cannot do that with flawed legislation and anything that would jeopardize the funding of education in Missouri."

The board vote was a strong endorsement of Nixon's veto, chamber President Matt McCormick said, but he declined to give the tally. The disagreement with the state business groups is a matter of perspective, he said.

"There are just some times we might be on a different side of the table with them," he said. "Our priority is Columbia and our region here and what does this mean to Columbia."

The bill Nixon vetoed would, over 10 years or more, cut the top state income tax rate to 5.5 percent from its current 6 percent. Tax rates would be cut in half for companies that pay
corporate income tax, and business owners who report their income on their personal tax returns would be able to exempt half their profits.

Supporters contend it is a gradual approach that would not result in disruptive revenue losses.

Nixon contends it has a potential for unintended revenue cuts that could drain as much as $1.2 billion from state coffers this year alone.

The campus rally will take place at 5 p.m. Sept. 5 at the MU Student Center, according to a memo emailed to students by Nick Droege, president of the Missouri Students Association.

"As one of the few areas of the budget unprotected by law, higher education in Missouri is the inevitable loser in this new equation," Droege wrote.

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Posted in Politics on Friday, August 23, 2013 2:00 pm.
A federal plan to rank colleges could mean students who attend a low-scoring school get less financial help from taxpayers.

And schools that fail to make the grade could see state support chopped, which area public universities said could be devastating for them.

“We are very appreciative of the public support we receive and we could not function without it,” said Pat Bosco, vice president for student life and dean of students at Kansas State University.

Bosco and officials of other area schools say they’re ready to be rated, though.
President Barack Obama in August announced his plan to score colleges based on measures such as tuition, graduation rates, debt and earnings of graduates, and percentage of lower-income students who attend.

The U.S. Department of Education has not yet developed a scoring grid for the new system, but potentially it could affect schools in a number of ways. Low marks could hurt a school’s enrollment, which means lost tuition dollars. States might also direct less funding to low-scoring schools.

Scoring is to begin in 2014 with the idea that by 2018, new legislation would tie federal financial aid to a school’s scores so that low-scoring schools would get less aid.

“I’m glad that President Obama is doing something about education, particularly post-secondary,” said Tom Dresslar, a college junior studying multimedia journalism at Northwest Missouri State University in Maryville.

Dresslar, of Omaha, Neb., has college buddies struggling to afford the cost of college. At the same time, they are worried about whether the college is actually preparing them for the job world.

“I think it is a good idea to tie financial aid to a school’s performance,” Dresslar said.

To identify those colleges doing the best job, the U.S. Department of Education would make the new college rating system available for students and families before the 2015 college year.

Students could still choose to attend any college they want, but they would know that they might eventually receive heftier federal grants and more affordable loans from higher-scoring schools.

Linking financial aid to the plan as a penalty for poor performance would need congressional support.

But states can move ahead to dole out dollars based on schools’ scores before Congress acts. States typically fund schools based on enrollment numbers, and a few states already fund schools based on performance.


“You can’t just throw money based on (enrollment) numbers,” Bradford said. “That doesn’t give me any idea about what I’m getting. I would much more favor looking at graduation rates to see that a school is actually turning out graduates.”

Missouri legislators last year considered performance-based funding for colleges but found it difficult to come up with a way to measure what kind of a job institutions were doing, said Rep. John Wright, a Rocheport Democrat and a member of the state’s higher education committee.
“I think the legislature wants to allocate resources to institutions that are doing a good job,” Wright said.

But he said legislators are concerned that using such measures as graduation rates might lead institutions to lower standards and graduate students who perhaps are not ready.

Leaders of area colleges and universities say they welcome the checks and balances.

“I don’t think any of us should be surprised that this is the next step in accountability,” said Brian Posler, chief academic officer at Baker University in Baldwin City, Kan.

“Taxpayers make a substantial investment in higher education. The idea that government takes responsibility in assuring that we maintain wise stewardship is not surprising.”

And while details that determine how schools stack up against peer institutions have yet to be rolled out, area school officials are confident they will measure up.

“This is competitive grading, which we know Baker University will do very well in,” Posler said. “We already track three of these areas — completion rates, affordability and success after graduation.”

In Columbia at the University of Missouri, Chancellor Brady Deaton said he welcomes the scrutiny.

“We feel confident the University of Missouri will hold its head high,” Deaton said.

He said MU has improved its six-year graduation rate from about 56.9 percent in 1990 to 70.8 percent currently.

University of Kansas officials also “support the whole issue of accountability,” said provost Jeff Vitter.

But he added that maintaining high graduation and retention rates is expensive while state funding shrinks and students are watching tuition prices.

“Of course, the plus side is that if we do a better job with retention, then students will be here and we will have their tuition dollars,” Vitter said.

The main reason given for Obama’s college scoring plan is to stop the surge in higher education costs and reduce student debt.

“College is now four times more expensive than it was, say, 20 or 30 years ago,” said Kevin Carey, the director of the Education Policy Program at the New America Foundation, a nonprofit, nonpartisan public policy institute tracking higher education reform.
Carey said that, on average, tuition has jumped 2, 3 and 4 percent over inflation every year. Students have borrowed more and more to attend. Collectively, student debt has topped $1 trillion.

How the plan will lower student costs is not completely clear, except schools would probably get high points for keeping a low price on tuition and handing out a lot of scholarships.

Another section in the plan addresses student debt, which, on average, is about $26,000 per graduate. Obama’s plan calls for capping student loan payments at 10 percent of a new graduate’s monthly income. And schools where fewer students default on loans might also score points.

K-State’s Pat Bosco sees the plan as a chance for schools to improve.

“Schools have to be more focused and can’t rely on raising tuition,” Bosco said. “President Obama’s plan speaks to what we are already doing here at K-State. It is all about student success, debt reduction, graduation rates and jobs.”

Schools probably would be compared to peer institutions, said Rachel Fishman, a policy analyst at the New America Foundation.

So, for example, the University of Missouri might be compared to the University of Kansas and Kansas State University, while Baker University would more likely be compared to small private schools such as Ottawa and Avila universities. And two-year community colleges to one another.

“The point isn’t to damage institutions that are doing good things for students, but to recognize top performers and encourage other schools to do better,” Fishman said.

“There are institutions out there that have higher default rates than graduation rates and that is a real problem. Those are the kinds of schools that students probably shouldn’t be spending their financial aid on.”
Colleges cope with shrinking pool of students

By Tim Barker

The University of Missouri-Columbia needs to find 638 students over the next few weeks to avoid breaking a winning streak that started in 1995.

Since then, the school has managed to grow — sometimes by a little, and sometimes by a lot — every year.

The numbers won’t be final for a couple of weeks. And while Mizzou did pick up nearly 500 stragglers by the time the official count was taken last year, things don’t look so promising this time around.

Of course, it’s not a major blow for a school with more than 34,000 students to lose a couple hundred of them.

But it illustrates the mounting pressure colleges face as they deal with a demographic shift that’s churning out smaller high school graduating classes.

It’s forcing schools to get creative in attracting students, often setting their sights on states where students are more plentiful. The problem is that many schools have the same ideas, said Ann Korschgen, Mizzou’s vice provost for enrollment management.

“There is much more aggressive competition this year,” Korschgen said in an email. “Many other major universities from across the country are trying to attract nonresident students, often with substantial scholarship packages or tuition waivers.”

A look around the region shows that Mizzou is among several campuses with slipping enrollment. It should be noted that some schools will gain substantially between now and the time they take their official counts, while others will lose students.

In Springfield, Missouri State University’s early enrollment figures show a 7.8 percent decline, but it is expected to surge by more than 2,000 students after high schoolers enroll in dual-credit programs. Similarly, Lindenwood University’s preliminary numbers suggest an 8.4 percent dip, but the figures don’t factor in some late-starting programs expected to create an enrollment increase topping 4 percent.

More troubling is what’s happening at St. Louis Community College, where enrollment has fallen more than 18 percent since 2011 when the school boasted an enrollment of more than 29,000. This year alone, enrollment is down nearly 11 percent, falling below the 24,000 mark.
While the school is scrambling to deal with the repercussions of the decline, it was not unexpected.

Community colleges, in particular, tend to see an enrollment boost during tough economic times, followed by a decline when things get better. That, combined with the smaller pool of high school graduates, is hurting the school.

“I don’t think where we are is any surprise to us,” said Donna Dare, vice chancellor for academic and student affairs. “Community colleges across the country are feeling the pinch. We’re all trying to level out and see where we stabilize.”

The community’s college’s downward trend also means trouble for the University of Missouri-St. Louis, which draws half of its transfer students from there.

It’s a situation that’s driven UMSL to push its recruiting boundaries as far as Chicago — with mixed results.

On one hand, the school saw a 5 percent increase in transfer applications this year, fueling hopes of a 1 percent increase in undergrads. But the optimism faded when the surge in applicants failed to produce an increase in actual students, said Alan Byrd, dean of enrollment services.

Instead, the school is looking at a slight enrollment decline and the prospect of similar results in coming years.

“We have to be able to attract more students from outside the region,” Byrd said. “We can’t rely on local students to meet our enrollment goals.”

There are schools, however, that are having success in spite of the high school demographic obstacle.

Early returns show the Missouri University of Science and Technology with a 4 percent increase in students.

Laura Stoll, vice provost and dean of enrollment management, attributes the hike to the school’s strong reputation and the fact that its graduates earn an average starting salary approaching $60,000 a year.

“We hear it from the families,” Stoll said. “People want a return on their investment.”

On the far extreme is Maryville University, which is looking at a 19 percent enrollment increase, topping the 5,000 mark.

That is, in part, because of an aggressive out-of-state recruiting effort that started several years ago, said Mark Lombardi, the school’s president. The university also has ramped up its graduate and online offerings — all part of an effort to counter the decline in high schoolers.
“A lot of schools sort of circled the wagons and looked inward,” Lombardi said. “We did the reverse.”

Maryville pulls 60 percent of its students from within 200 miles of the school. And while enrollment has remained steady with that group, Lombardi said the strongest growth had come from out of state.

The school actively seeks students throughout the Midwest and now has full-time recruiters in Texas and California, a state that’s having trouble meeting the higher education needs of its residents.

Among the school’s recent additions is Ryan Serrano, a freshman from Rancho Cucamonga, Calif.

Serrano, who is studying criminal justice, said he learned about Maryville when he went to one of the university’s recruiting sessions at his high school.

Maryville gradually climbed to the top of his wish list as he visited schools on the East and West Coasts. It was a spring break trip to St. Louis that sold him on the campus — much to the surprise of his parents.

“My folks were kind of shocked. But they knew I wanted to get out of the state,” Serrano said. “I just wanted to go somewhere new.”
MU keeps watch for counterfeit tickets

By Karyn Spory

Danny Isom stood before the Faurot Field sign at Providence Road and Stadium Boulevard yesterday afternoon with a cooler at his feet and a handful of tickets in the air.

The St. Louis resident dipped a washcloth in his cooler before putting it back atop his head and flashing the game-day tickets to the black-and-gold-clad crowd. He buys tickets from season ticket holders to resell outside Missouri football games, he said.

"They may have four season tickets, but only two people would show up, so they will give them to you at somewhat of a discounted price," he said.

Ticket scalping is legal, but consumer advocates and law enforcement officials still warn buyers to be cautious about what they're paying for.

The issue got attention locally last fall when a number of people who unknowingly purchased counterfeit tickets got turned away at the gate at the Missouri-Georgia game. The Better Business Bureau recently put out an advisory warning about fake tickets for events ranging from concerts to the World Series.

Capt. Brian Weimer of the University of Missouri Police Department said as long as the ticket sellers are on a city sidewalk and not on MU property, there isn't anything the police department can do. But he said the department still encourages people to buy from ticket booths or other more traditional sources.

"You never know what could happen as far as the fake knock-offs," Weimer said.

Because scalpers purchase tickets through other sources, he said, there is no telling whether a ticket is real until it is scanned. He said during the Georgia game last year, an abundance of fake tickets were circulating.

"The good thing is, once it happened, we notified the public and people stopped buying as many of those," he said.
Weimer said the Georgia game was the point when the department had the most issues with fake tickets, although there was not a specific count of how many people tried to use them. He said there also have been instances at football games in which people have used their tickets to get in and then passed them back through the fence to sell to scalpers, but if the ticket has already been scanned, it won't be accepted again.

When you buy tickets "on the street, you don't know if they're good or bad. That's the chance you take," he said.

Isom said if he ends up with tickets that don't work, he gives the buyers new tickets or refunds their money.

He wouldn't say how much he paid for the tickets he was selling yesterday, but because Missouri was playing Murray State — a team that "wasn't as good" as some upcoming opponents — he could get the tickets relatively cheap. He said he typically sells to people from out of town and would probably only get $15 to $20 per ticket.

Mike Harrison, regional director for the Better Business Bureau, said on a national level the bureau has noticed an increase of online ticket-selling scams.

He said consumers should only purchase tickets through an accredited ticket bureau, but if they do buy from another online source, it's best to pay with a credit card or Paypal account that will allow the opportunity to dispute the charges.

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This article was published in the Sunday, September 1, 2013 edition of The Columbia Daily Tribune with the headline "Buying at your own risk: MU keeps watch for counterfeit tickets."

Posted in Local on Sunday, September 1, 2013 2:00 am
MU's Arabic language program grows

Intermediate class is offered this fall.

By Karyn Spory

Saturday, August 31, 2013 at 2:00 am

After mastering Spanish, Derek Garth was looking for another linguistic challenge and settled on Arabic, a relatively new offering at the University of Missouri that has recently expanded.

Garth said he transferred to MU from Southwest Baptist University, where he majored in criminal justice and Spanish after taking Spanish through most of high school. There were several reasons behind the decision to learn Arabic, the senior linguistics major said.

"At first, my reasons were kind of selfish," he said. "Going into law enforcement," Arabic "is kind of the new Russian."

Garth said he thinks that, unfortunately, Arabic has been tagged as the new international criminal language. However, he said once he began class, he fell in love with the language and the culture.

Garth said he loves a challenge, and learning Arabic is proving to be just that.

"Arabic grammar is so intricate and unique," he said, noting the sentence structure is nothing like that of Romance languages such as Spanish.

Garth is now enrolled in intermediate Arabic. Ted Tarkow, associate dean of MU's College of Arts and Science, said the university has been offering Arabic for several years, and because of demand, it added the intermediate level this fall, with about eight students.

Tarkow said Zaid Mahir serves as the Arabic instructor and has been willing to try to expand the Arabic offerings at the university. Tarkow said that besides Arabic, the university is working to offer more coursework in other fields that touch on the Middle East.
"Increasingly, preparing students for careers or lives that are more knowledgeable about the Middle East should be one of our goals," he said.

James Hummel, a senior geography student, said he has always been interested in the Middle East, but his involvement in the Army National Guard led to his decision to take Arabic. He needed 12 credit hours of a foreign language, and as a member of the National Guard, he thought Arabic might be helpful.

Ida Winter, a sophomore journalism major, spent her high school years in Tripoli, Lebanon, where her father taught as a Fulbright professor. Winter said her time in Lebanon made her want to become a foreign correspondent.

"In order to do that, I knew that I had to learn Arabic," she said.

This summer, Winter spent nine weeks in Madison, Wis., at the Arabic Persian Turkish Language Immersion Institute, where she was only allowed to speak English on Friday evenings.

"It definitely helped the fluency," she said.

Winter is now enrolled in intermediate Arabic, along with Garth and Hummel.

"It's interesting the subset of Mizzou students, people who are so obsessed with Arabic and the Middle Eastern culture. … I have the feeling we will know each other very well by the end of the semester," she said.

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Posted in Local, Education on Saturday, August 31, 2013 2:00 am.
Bars team up to oppose street closure

Some don't like Harpo's request.

By Andrew Denney

Saturday, August 31, 2013 at 2:00 am Comments (5)

**As an act of protest against one downtown bar's street-closure request for University of Missouri home football weekends, other bars have filed their own street-closure requests for the same dates.**

According to a report to the Columbia City Council, set to be presented Tuesday at the council's regular meeting, nine businesses have filed or are in the process of filing their own street-closure requests for the same weekends Harpo's Bar and Grill is requesting them. Harpo's proposal aims to set up an outdoor fan zone for big game weekends.

The report contains a letter Bengal's Bar and Grill co-owners Jack and Julie Rader sent to City Manager Mike Matthes, Assistant City Manager Carol Rhodes and council members. The letter states that weekends with MU home football games are the "lifeblood" of downtown businesses and notes that, in 2010, the council rejected a similar proposal from Harpo's because it violated the spirit of the city's street-closure ordinance and amounted to "a sports bar wanting to spew out into the streets to increase their capacity and thus make extra money."

"It would be completely unfair for Harpo's to be allowed to expand out into their street for their exclusive benefit when most other downtown businesses would not be allowed to do the same," the letter states. The letter also notes that the council in 2011 amended the street-closure ordinance to prohibit closures within 750 feet of a previously granted request, which would prohibit many businesses from closing streets to compete with Harpo's.

According to the council report, the city has received street-closure requests from Bengal's, the SoCo Club and Shiloh Bar and Grill. The Raders' letter states that the owners of Campus Bar & Grill, Quinton's, Tonic, Déjà Vu, The FieldHouse and Willie's have expressed intent to file similar requests and that the bars would withdraw the requests if the council rejects Harpo's.
Harpo's has requested the closure of Cherry between Ninth and Tenth streets for Oct. 18-19, Oct. 25-26, Nov. 1-2 and Nov. 30. For the first three dates, which fall on Fridays and Saturdays, the section of Cherry between Ninth and Tenth would be closed from noon Friday until early Sunday.

MU's football team is scheduled to play Southeastern Conference rivals Florida, South Carolina, Tennessee and Texas A&M on the weekends when Harpo's has requested closures.

Downtown street closures have been a sore subject for some merchants who argue that they have the potential of cutting traffic to their businesses and giving an unfair advantage to others. Last year, MU's first year in the SEC, members of the local business community attempted to establish a downtown party zone dubbed Tiger Town that would have emulated similar setups in other SEC cities. The idea met opposition from downtown merchants.

Street-closure requests are reviewed by the city's special events committee, which is made up of city staff members. Rhodes, the chairwoman of the committee, said that in the 19 years she has worked with the city, she had never seen a situation in which businesses filed street-closure requests as an act of protest.

The Downtown Community Improvement District board of directors approved a recommendation Aug. 13 for the city to grant Harpo's request, which aims to create a hospitality zone to provide fans with food, drinks and music. Harpo's owner Kevin Fitzpatrick said he thinks the event has the potential to create a festival atmosphere downtown on game days that could be a "magnet" for all downtown businesses.

"We think that's the best thing for the downtown community as a whole," Fitzpatrick said.

Fitzpatrick said business owners and the city should be more concerned with the possibility that MU officials could decide to have their own festival and set up a party zone on campus, similar to The Grove tailgating area at the University of Mississippi. If that happened, Fitzpatrick said, it would draw foot traffic away from downtown merchants.

"It's time for the city to step forward and try something instead of saying no to everything," Fitzpatrick said.

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Posted in Local on Saturday, August 31, 2013 2:00 am.
Tailgaters try to stay cool

By Karyn Spory

Nick Sandbothe said he had devised the perfect plan to stay hydrated and cool while tailgating yesterday before the University of Missouri’s football season opener against Murray State.

“I’m drinking beer, water, beer, water, and then I’m dipping my hat in the cooler and putting it back on my head,” he said.

Sandbothe, a Columbia resident, said he also visited the people in the tent next door because they had a fan hooked up to a mister.

“I sat in front of that for awhile, and I feel pretty good right now,” Sandbothe said.

Jeff McCarthy of Osborn had a similar plan: To stay hydrated, he said, he’d be drinking one water for every two beers.

Karla Douglas of O’Fallon and her husband, Chris, brought a small inflatable pool with them for tailgating. The couple filled the pool with five bags of ice when they got started at 11 a.m. By 2 p.m., the pool had been reduced to water, which Karla Douglas and her friends dipped their feet in. Her husband also said playing beer pong would help keep them hydrated, although water bottles were abundant in their tent.

By 3 p.m., the temperature had reached 100 degrees, with a heat index of 107, according to National Weather Service measurements from Columbia Regional Airport.

Mark Langworthy of Columbia said he and his family tailgate at every home game, and he thought participation yesterday seemed a little low, mostly because of the heat. “It’s too hot and Labor Day weekend. When we get into SEC games, it’ll cool down and fill up,” he said of the parking lot.

Capt. Brian Weimer of the MU Police Department put out a reminder before the game to bring enough water to last throughout hot game days.
“Even if you choose to drink some alcohol, make sure you’re drinking some water with that so you stay hydrated,” Weimer said.

Marilyn Henshaw, house manager at University Hospital, said the hospital had treated at least four people for dehydration. Kris Fry, house supervisor at Boone Hospital Center, said the emergency department at Boone had not seen any patients with heat-related illness yesterday.

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Posted in Local on Sunday, September 1, 2013 2:00 am.
Eugenie C. Scott Fights the Teaching of Creationism in Schools

Eugenie C. Scott’s journey to the front lines of the evolution wars began in 1974, when James Gavan, a physical anthropologist at the University of Missouri, accepted an invitation to debate Duane Gish, a biochemist and a leader in the creationist movement.

At the time, Dr. Scott was a newly minted professor of physical anthropology at the University of Kentucky. Dr. Gavan had been her mentor at the University of Missouri, where she earned her doctorate, so she took a few of her students to Missouri to hear the debate.

“We were greatly dismayed,” Dr. Scott recalled in an interview. “The scientist talked science, and the creationist connected to the audience and told good jokes and was really personable. And presented a lot of really bad science.”

She realized then that creationism is “a movement that could have really serious consequences for science and science education.”

Today, Dr. Scott, 67, is nearing the end of a 27-year stint as executive director of the National Center for Science Education, which despite a relatively skimpy budget has had an outsize impact on the battles in courtrooms and classrooms over whether creationism — the idea that the universe was devised as it is by a supernatural agent — or its ideological cousin, “intelligent design,” should be taught in public schools.

“There is no single organization in the United States that has been as important in the battle over evolution as the National Center for Science Education,” Kenneth R. Miller, a biologist at Brown University, said in an e-mail. As its director, Dr. Scott has mobilized “scientists, educators, lay people, religious groups, skeptics, agnostics, believers, scholars and ordinary citizens” to advance the cause of science.

Dr. Miller, an author of a widely used biology textbook, was an important witness in one of the center’s major court victories, Kitzmiller v. Dover Area School District, a federal case decided in 2005. It erupted when a local school board in Pennsylvania directed middle-school science teachers to instruct their students that there were serious scientific challenges to the theory of evolution, and to offer them a creationist text for an alternate view.

The teachers refused, some parents sued, and Dr. Scott and the center helped organize evidence and witnesses, including Dr. Miller, to win a decisive victory. The judge, a Republican, spoke scathingly of the “breathtaking inanity” of the creationists’ arguments.
Still, “it took guts” for the teachers to stand up to the school officials, Dr. Scott said, even though there is no credible scientific challenge to the theory of evolution. In fact, evolution is probably the most thoroughly examined and abundantly supported idea in all of science. But arguments about teaching it rage on. Polls show that fewer than half of Americans accept evolution as scientific fact.

Dr. Scott said perhaps 20 percent to 25 percent of the nation’s biology teachers hold creationist views. “People ask me, ‘We still have this problem, what good has N.C.S.E. done?’ ” Dr. Scott said. But without the organization, she and others note, the situation in many schools would be quite different.

“Working with local groups, we have stopped a lot of really bad resolutions and policies at the state level,” she said. “We need to do a lot more, but textbooks all have evolution now. They don’t qualify it with, ‘Some scientists believe. . . .’

To organizations like the Discovery Institute, which backs the teaching of intelligent design in schools, Dr. Scott actually is “stifling legitimate scientific dissent,” as the group says on its Web site. It has also accused the N.C.S.E. of misrepresenting its work.

But in 2010, the National Academy of Sciences, the nation’s most eminent scientific organization, awarded Dr. Scott its Public Welfare Medal for “extraordinary use of science for the public good.”

“Eugenie Scott has worked tirelessly and very effectively to improve the teaching of both the nature of science and the science of evolution,” the academy president, Ralph J. Cicerone, said at the time. “She makes the case for science again and again.”

A tall, voluble woman with a self-deprecating sense of humor, Dr. Scott was born in La Crosse, Wis., attended the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and earned her doctorate at Missouri in 1974. The University of Kentucky, in Lexington, was her first teaching job. In 1980, a citizens’ group proposed that Lexington’s schools should teach creationism.

Dr. Scott became a leader of opponents of the measure. “I was one of the few people on campus who knew what this stuff was about,” she said. It took two years, but eventually the school board rejected the proposal.

At the same time, evolutionary biologists like Stephen Jay Gould of Harvard University and Niles Eldredge of the American Museum of Natural History, along with Jack Friedman, then a teacher in Syosset, N.Y., were organizing what Mr. Friedman called “committees of correspondence” to encourage science teachers all over the country to follow the controversy over evolution and to keep in touch. A result of all this activism was the establishment, in 1983, of the N.C.S.E.

Meanwhile, Dr. Scott was losing a fight for tenure at the University of Kentucky. In 1986, she saw an ad for a national director for the science center. She got the job.
Today the organization, based in Oakland, Calif., has a staff of 14 — not all full-time, Dr. Scott said — and an annual budget of about $1.5 million, raised from private foundations and its approximately 5,000 members. When creationist efforts arise, N.C.S.E. helps local people fight them.

“We can give them the advice we have amassed from similar groups over the years,” Dr. Scott said. “Our joke is we run grass-roots organizations from the top down.”

In addition to reports and a weekly newsletter, it has produced a book, “Evolution vs. Creationism.” A recent issue of the newsletter reports that a new poll finds that more residents of Georgia believe in creationism than in evolution. As Dr. Scott said she saw in the Gavan-Gish debate long ago, merely providing information is not enough. “You do not solve the creation-evolution issue just by throwing science at it,” she said.

She is particularly distressed to hear people assert that belief in evolution is incompatible with religious faith. Though Dr. Scott described herself as a “humanist” who is not religious, she said, “there is not a dichotomous division between people of faith and science. There are many people of faith who accept evolution. This is something many people do not realize.”

This year, the N.C.S.E. added climate change to its agenda. “Understanding how science works is extremely central to the evolution issue, but also to the climate issue,” Dr. Scott said. Dr. Scott, known as Genie, expects to step down as executive director at the end of the year. Besides spending time with her husband and their daughter, Dr. Scott plans to write a memoir and help the center organize its records, possibly the most complete archive of the evolution wars in the United States.

Already, scholars have been delving into the files. Often they are people from other countries struggling to understand why a scientific theory that goes virtually unchallenged in every other developed country causes such uproar in the United States. “We have archives no one else has,” Dr. Scott said. “It is going to be fun for me, digging through this.”
MU custodian shares testimony of war, prison and gospel

Robert Wilson rediscovered his faith and his voice

By Allyson Wilson

August 29, 2013 | 12:00 a.m. CST

A familiar voice projects from the custodian’s closet that doubles as Robert Wilson’s office in Lee Hills Hall on MU’s campus. Between shelves of cleaning supplies, certificates hung on the walls and various knickknacks, Wilson sits forward and uses his fingers for emphasis as he recounts the events of his life. Light glints off the two small gold earrings in his left ear as he straightens up and closes his eyes.

Then he begins to sing.

Wilson uses his whole body when he sings, and a serene look washes over his aged face as his smooth baritone voice rolls from his mouth. He croons the gospel song “I Rise,” the words aching with experience and faith.

“Go ahead and drive those nails through my hand,” he sings. His callused fingertips slap his thighs, and the change and keys in his pocket rattle like a tambourine. His square-toed shoes keep time with the rise and fall of his powder-blue work shirt. The last notes echo through his tiny basement office.

As the spell breaks, Wilson’s coffee-brown eyes open and his full lips part to reveal a toothy grin.

“It’s a good song,” he says, as he leans back in his swiveling desk chair. “It’s a real nice song.”

Wilson’s voice echoes a troubled history, through church halls, off prison walls and back into the light of grace. It carries notes of hope and faith. His vocal testament can be heard on his latest gospel single.
Some might not know Wilson by name, but they definitely know his bubbly personality and face. More than a custodian, Wilson has been warming student and faculty hearts for more than 10 years. Whether it’s words of encouragement to students, cleaning extra buildings on campus or holding doors open for visitors of Lee Hills, Wilson fully invests himself in others.

Wilson has traveled and stumbled along the long road of his life, but he has no qualms about sharing his life story because he believes his testimony might help someone. Nancy Stockett is one of the people who Wilson has helped throughout his lifetime.

“He’s a good-hearted person,” says Stockett, circulation manager at the Columbia Missourian and a friend of Wilson’s for more than a decade.

“He’s a giving person,” she says. “When I say giving, not so much of himself, but I believe that if he sees a need he would do the best he could to help with that need, such as sharing his grapes. He’s just an overall great guy.”

Wilson was born July 4, 1949, in the tiny southeastern Missouri town of Wardell. The fifth of 10 children, he grew up in the church and sang in Wardell’s St. Paul’s Baptist Church choir.

As a child, he dreamed of being a successful singer and becoming a minister. He says that he and his siblings were all born with “the voice” and that they were “like the Jacksons, except without the Jackson problems.”

Wilson’s first daughter, Phylis, was born in 1967 on the night he graduated from high school. He admits being unable to take care of himself and his girlfriend Joann, much less their child. He moved to Jefferson City to attend Lincoln University but dropped out to work to support his mother and siblings. He returned to Wardell, but he held aspirations of traveling.

“I didn’t want to be one of those high school graduates that never left home,” Wilson says with a hint of Southern drawl dripping from his words. “I didn’t want to be a country boy with five or six babies.”

In 1968, he moved to Chicago and joined the Army in hopes of seeing the world.

Unfortunately, it was to fight.

Wilson encountered the terror of war firsthand. Other men were attempting to escape the Vietnam War draft by dressing like women, he says. The harsh realities of war were often difficult for him to handle as well, but he stuck to his commitment for 12 years and in 1980 retired as a supply sergeant.

On a brief leave from service, Wilson visited Joann and Phylis who were living in Columbia. Phylis, now 7 years old, answered the door. She ran up to Wilson and jumped on him without hesitation and hugged him as tightly as she could.

“Daddy,” she said, recognizing Wilson from a portrait taken before he left for the Army.
“Phylis, you don’t know who that man is,” Joann said.

“Yes, I do,” Phylis said. “That’s my daddy.” She latched onto Wilson again as he tried to leave to greet others.
“Where are you going?” she said with tears in her wide brown eyes. She didn’t wait for his answer and added, “I’m going with you.”

Wilson and Phylis spent the rest of the day together, eating ice cream, visiting her father’s friends, eating at McDonald’s and playing in the park. They didn’t return home until 10:30 that night, much to her mother’s dismay.

Their relationship, however, saw more challenges over the next decade.

Around 1986, Wilson started using crack cocaine and fought his addiction for the next eight years. He was at war with himself. He lost jobs and relationships with loved ones and eventually served two prison sentences. The first was only 30 days. Arrested again in 1993, he was sent to Tipton Correctional Center on a seven-year sentence.

During his second incarceration, Wilson realized his addiction was affecting his family. By this time he had another daughter, Tanisha, as well as a failed first marriage. He decided that drugs had no place in his life.

“This second time was different for me because I saw the change in myself,” he says, hanging his head and shaking it in disbelief. “In the mirror, I could see the change.”

Behind bars, Wilson used the time to contemplate the direction of his life. He rediscovered his faith and set about atoning for the wrongs he had done. He stopped smoking and joined the prison ministry and a singing group called The Shining Stars.

Wilson even began writing an autobiography with the hope of sharing his story as a cautionary tale.

Wilson says that prior to his arrest he was heading for disaster. He knew once he got out of prison, he had to stay out. He believed that if he went down the same path a third time, he wouldn’t make it out alive.

“I often say that when I got arrested, I got arrested and rescued at the same time,” he says. “Because God intervened, he intercepted and rescued me. That was the purpose of me writing that song and recording ‘He Turned Me Around.’ I was literally turned around in a totally different direction.”

By the time he was released in 2000, Wilson had written more than a dozen songs. He went to rehab and cleaned up. His final day there is an accomplishment he still holds dear.

That same year, Wilson joined St. Luke’s United Methodist Church in Columbia, where he sang in the choir and was a member for 10 years.
Stockett met Wilson at St. Luke’s. She says that his testimony is what drew her to him.

“He acknowledged that he had been in prison and how the Lord had brought him through that,” Stockett says. “And I had a son in prison at that time. So it was just inspiring to see how he came through that, and I felt like my son could do the same thing.”

Wilson got involved with a singing group called One Accord. They showed promise of being a successful gospel group and even recorded their debut CD and performed at the Missouri Theatre.

One Accord gave Wilson a taste of the spotlight. However, in 2010 the group disbanded because of personal issues. It broke his heart, but he remains hopeful for a reunion one day.


“Betty Ann keeps me going,” he says, leaning back in his desk chair and grinning from ear to ear. “She’s just a big ol’ bundle of joy.”

Wilson’s relationships with his family also are blessings that help him from day to day.

“Don’t get me wrong, a lot of times I have bad days, but what keeps me going is I think about the past and what I used to do and it keeps me going,” he says, with a satisfied nod as he looks around the closet. “I think about how blessed I am to even have a job.”

Wilson touches other people in song. He once comforted a grieving colleague whose father had died. He went to her office, held her hands and sang to her. She cried as he sang.

Singing is not just something that Wilson does as a hobby—he’s passionate about it. He can be heard humming and singing to himself in the early morning hours at work. When it’s time to hit a high note, he can’t contain the sound within himself and lets the note resonate throughout Lee Hills Hall.

Even at choir rehearsals, his fists clench, his eyes tighten and his brows furrow as he pulls the notes from a deeper place, one of gratitude.

Wilson plans on retiring next year and hopes to devote more time to music. He recently finished his newest single, the aptly named “Never Give Up.” The title reflects his belief that he’s still a work in progress.

Wilson’s experiences influence all of his songwriting. His three singles, “Turn Me Around,” “Thankful” and “Never Give Up,” each are a testimony to the trials he has lived through and the lessons he has learned.

Above all, Wilson’s faith is the most powerful force supporting him.
“God knows your plan, more than you do,” Wilson says. “He’s the one who installed it in you. He makes a way for those dreams to come true. No matter what obstacles get in your way.”

Robert Wilson was featured in the Columbia Missourian’s "100 Ages. A Century of Voices" project.

- Contact an editor with corrections or additional information
Some Missouri Counties Experiencing Flash Drought

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP) - Parts of southern Missouri experienced flash flooding this past month. Now parts of northern Missouri are in a flash drought.

That's the phrase being used to describe the sudden onset of drought conditions due to a spike in hot, dry, sunny days with low humidity.

A U.S. Drought Monitor map released last week shows that about a dozen northern Missouri counties are in a severe drought, and moderate drought conditions cover almost the whole northern half of the state.

University of Missouri climatologist Pat Guinan says this may have been the driest August since 1984 in northern Missouri. But because of cooler conditions earlier this summer, he says most crops were in decent condition until the last 10 days of August.
Program Aids Immigrant Farmers

A program run by MU Extension is helping immigrant farmers in southwest Missouri grow their businesses and establish a life for themselves in America.

According to the Center for Rural Affairs website, CRA was awarded $305,263 through USDA’s Outreach Grant Program to aid struggling minority farmers. CRA teamed up with MU Extension in 2011 to create the Beginning Farmers Program.

Stephen Jeanetta, an extension assistant professor in rural sociology, has been with the program since its beginning. He said they first tried to figure out why there was such a decrease in Hispanic farmers, but an increase in Hispanic population.

“We figured out why the Hispanic farmers were going in and out of the business so quickly,” Jeanetta said. “The reason was because they had no support and no access to other resources.”

CRA teamed up with MU Extension with the initial goal of finding challenges facing Hispanic farmers and creating programs to help them, according to the CRA website. Workshops were created to help Latino farmers with federal farm programs, as well as how to decide what farming practices best suit their land and network with other farmers.

Jeanetta said they’ve had two different types of workshops in the past. He said the first was about farm management practices and the production side, and the second dealt with leadership development and learning about other networks.

“They were provided with a lot of information about organizations they could get help from, such as the USDA or MU Extension,” Jeanetta said.

Jeanetta said the program is still doing well.

“We have a fall session coming up,” Jeanetta said. “It will be held in Monett, Mo. that is in the southwest Missouri area. The sessions are just the same as the workshops, supporting and aiding the Hispanic farmers.”

Federico Nunez is just one of many immigrant farmers in the program. After a long day of work, Nunez said he begins his second job raising chickens, cattle, horses, and pigs on his farm in Wheaton. He said farming is not only his passion, but his background.

“I started farming because growing up as a child that’s all my parents did,” Nunez said in an email. “We had our own garden and raised animals, so when I was on my own, I moved to the country and started my own farm so that my own kids could grow up with the same values.”
Nunez said information and resources are limited for immigrant farmers due to the lack of help.

“I didn’t use many services to help me with my farm. I just did it on my own,” Nunez said in an email. “But the workshop gave me information and answers I have been needing.”

There are several factors considered barriers and challenges to Latino farmers, according to the CRA website. Among the many factors are limited access to land, limited financial literacy and limited knowledge of USDA programs.

Nunez said all immigrant farmers need is support and more resources. He said he’s happy to have found work, and that he’s established a life for himself in America.

“(It’s) everyone’s dream, to work for myself, not for somebody else,” Nunez said in an email. “It’s the American dream.”