The University of Missouri announced Thursday that it has connected to a high-speed network that offers speeds of up to 100 gigabits per second and will help enhance its research capabilities.

Gary Allen, vice president of IT for the UM System, said MU is one of a select group of institutions across the country that are being designated as "innovation campuses" by Internet2, a not-for-profit computer networking consortium led by members from the research and education communities, industry and government.

"These sites are pilot sites for next-generation Internet working across the country," Allen said.

Allen said the development of the Internet2 Innovation Platform came from a $1 million grant from the National Science Foundation. Allen said the UM System pays a membership fee to be part of Internet2. He said that membership costs approximately $64,000 per year and includes all four campuses within the system.

Allen said MU has used Internet2 through an off-campus provider for years, but now the university has a direct link because the backbone of the Innovation Network runs from Kansas City to St. Louis, passing right through Columbia.

"We're unique in the fact that we have two connections, 100 gigabit in Kansas City and 100 gigabit to St. Louis and 100 gigabit for the campus. We are free to use all of it if we chose to do so," said Gordon Springer, associate professor of computer engineering and computer science.

Springer added that MU is the only university that is physically part of the Internet2 backbone.
Allen said being part of this network will help enhance MU’s research because the university will be able to move large data sets much quicker.

"This network will give us a leg up, in that we can send very large data sets across very large distances and bring us all collectively closer together," Allen said.

Springer said instead of taking days and even weeks to send extremely large data sets to supercomputing facilities, it would take a matter of minutes.

Allen said comparatively, a household's computing speed would be anywhere from 10 to 12 megabits per second. MU's 100-gigabit connection is roughly 10,000 times the speed of what an average person receives at home, he said. Internet2 said this speed is 100 times faster than Google Fiber, which is in place in the Kansas City area.

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MU researchers can now move large data sets with new high-speed Internet

By Crystal Thomas

October 10, 2013 | 8:40 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Researchers at MU are now able to move large data sets in a shorter amount of time using the high-speed Internet connection Internet2, said Gary Allen, University of Missouri System vice president for information technology, in an announcement Thursday morning.

The university has used Internet2 in the past, but it will now operate at a 100-gigabit speed instead of its previous 10-gigabit speed, said Prasad Calyam, an assistant professor in the MU computer science department.

Internet2's 100-gigabit speed is 10,000 times faster than regular at-home Internet and 100 times faster than Kansas City's Google Fiber network, said Gordon Springer, an associate professor in MU's computer science department.

Data sets that had previously taken weeks or days to send will now take minutes or seconds, Springer said.

"Essentially, one of the main reasons this is going to be of importance is it's going to give us the ability to move extremely large data sets to supercomputing facilities or other kinds of analytical tools that are located around the world," Allen said.

MU is also the first school to have a "network node," the equipment needed for a strong connection to the network, Calyam said. The presence of that equipment will also allow the information to move at a quicker speed for MU researchers, he said.

Previously, the Internet2 nodes closest to MU were in Kansas City and St. Louis. The new node at MU connects to those sites.
When researchers with access to Internet2 send large data sets to other institutions, the information is diverted through an Internet2 connection rather than a commercial internet connection or a university's private connection, Internet2 spokesman Todd Sedmak said.

Because the data sets can avoid the firewalls and other security measures of commercial internet connections, the data moves much faster, he said.

Calyam is one researcher whose work will benefit from the Internet2 improvements.

In collaboration with the nonprofit U.S. Ignite, Calyam is developing an elder-care application that allows seniors in Kansas City to interact with doctors and medical technology at MU. Information from the application travels through Google Fiber lines in the seniors' homes to Kansas City's Internet2 site, then to the site at MU.

Prasad said Internet2's 100-gigabit connection can be used not only for medical and educational purposes but also, eventually, by small businesses.

"An explosion of bandwidth, itself, is a driver of the economy," Calyam said. "And people will have a much better quality of life."

MU pays for Internet2 access with National Science Foundation grants and a $64,000-per-year membership fee, Allen said.

The announcement about the updates to MU's Internet2 access came during Cyberinfrastructure Day, an event in which faculty researchers, graduate students and research support staff collaborated and discussed technology of the future.

"In the next five years, infrastructures will look very different from today's," Calyam said at the event. "It will look more like what we are building."

Supervising editor is Margaux Henquinet.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

MU librarian steps up as federal government websites shut down

By James Gordon
October 10, 2013 | 6:28 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Government transparency shouldn't suffer while the federal shutdown drags on, and Maria Concannon wants you to know that librarians are here to help.

Concannon, the government documents regional coordinator for MU Libraries, is surveying people hampered by the lack of government information to help connect people with the information they're missing.

When the federal government partially shut down on Oct. 1, websites like the U.S. Census Data, the Federal Trade Commission, NASA and the National Archives took down much of the content that journalists, researchers and other members of the public have come to rely on.

Concannon posted a survey Tuesday to the Ellis Library website, asking Missouri residents how they've been affected by the shutdown. She had 15 respondents as of Wednesday.

"There are a lot of categories for people writing in," Concannon said. "It's not just students. It's not just professors. It's also organizations that need government information in order to do their work."

More than just a university library, Ellis is part of the federal depository library program established by Congress in the late 19th century to give the public free access to government information, she said.

Back then, it was all on paper. Agencies would send documents to the federal Government Printing Office, which would print lots of extra copies and ship them to the libraries. But over the last decade, federal agencies have published more of their material online, the ideal way to distribute data in the information age.
Unless you have to furlough your IT workers. Then those websites and data feeds go dark.

Nonetheless, Concannon wants to be sure the public maintains access to information about its government.

Besides just collecting data, her goal is to help point the public to other sources for the information they need.

For example, she said people looking for census data should also try the Missouri Census Data Center, a state-run organization.

Additionally, Concannon said people can usually find important statistics quoted somewhere in records of congressional hearings. The library's subscription to ProQuest Congressional, a commercial product, is still working.

*Supervising editor is Allie Hinga.*
SHUTDOWN IMPACT: SOME NATIONAL PARKS COULD REOPEN

4 hours ago • By The Associated Press

NO MU MENTION

The government shutdown continues with some glimmer of hope for those who would like to visit the nation's national parks: The Obama administration said it would consider offers from the states to use their own money to pay for park operations.

Meanwhile, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission sent roughly 90 percent of its staff home Thursday, though it will respond to immediate safety concerns.

The shutdown continues to have far-reaching consequences for some, but minimal impact on others. Mail is being delivered. Social Security and Medicare benefits continue to flow. But the shutdown has been particularly harsh on those who rely on tourism, such as communities near the Grand Canyon and Yellowstone national parks.

A look at how services have been affected, and sometimes not, by Congress failing to reach an agreement averting a partial government shutdown:

TRAVEL

Federal air traffic controllers remain on the job and airport screeners continue to funnel passengers through security checkpoints. Furloughs of safety inspectors had put inspections of planes, pilots and aircraft repair stations on hold, but the Federal Aviation Administration says it is asking 800 employees — including some safety inspectors — to return to work this week. More than 2,900 inspectors had been furloughed. The State Department continues processing foreign applications for visas and U.S. applications for passports, since fees are collected to finance those services. Embassies and consulates overseas remain open and are providing services for U.S. citizens abroad.

BENEFIT PAYMENTS
Social Security and Medicare benefits continue to be paid out, but there could be delays in processing new disability applications. The Social Security Administration is also delaying the announcement of the size of next year's cost-of-living adjustment, which was supposed to come out on Oct. 16. Unemployment benefits are also still going out.

FEDERAL COURTS

Federal courts, which have been using fees and other funds to operate since the shutdown began, will likely have enough money to operate until Oct. 17, and possibly Oct. 18.

After that, the courts will run out of money and shut down all nonessential work.

A limited number of workers would perform essential work, while all others would be furloughed. Each court would make a determination on what is essential and nonessential. Judges would still be able to seat jurors, but the jurors won’t be paid until Congress provides funding. Court-appointed lawyers would also not get paid.

The Supreme Court opened its term Monday and says its business will go on despite the ongoing shutdown. The Supreme Court announced Thursday it would stay open through Friday, Oct. 18, including hearing two days of arguments next week.

RECREATION

All national parks have been closed since the shutdown began, but the Obama administration said Thursday it would allow states to use their own money to reopen some national parks. Figures compiled by a coalition of retired park service workers indicate that some 700,000 people a day would have been visiting the parks and that the surrounding areas are losing $76 million in visitor spending per day.

In Washington, monuments along the National Mall have been closed, as have the Smithsonian museums, including the National Zoo. Among the visitor centers that have closed: the Statue of Liberty in New York, Independence Hall in Philadelphia and Alcatraz Island near San Francisco. National wildlife refuges have been closed off to hunters and fishermen just as hunting season was getting underway in many states.

CONSUMER SAFETY

Several protection agencies have curtailed their work.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission was shutting down most operations on Thursday. However, resident inspectors will remain on the job and any immediate safety or security matters will be handled.

The Food and Drug Administration and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention say they can handle recalls and high-risk foodborne outbreaks, but discovering them will be more difficult because many of the people who investigate outbreaks have been furloughed. Routine food safety inspections were suspended, so most food manufacturers won’t have to worry about periodic visits from government inspectors. U.S. food inspections abroad have also been halted. USDA inspectors are on the lines every day in meatpacking plants and are required to be there by law for the plants to stay open.
The National Transportation Safety Board is not investigating most transportation accidents, making an exception only if officials believe lives or property are in danger.

Auto recalls and investigations of safety defects have been put on hold during the partial government shutdown. The public can still file safety complaints through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration’s website, but no one has been investigating them since the shutdown began over a week ago. Manufacturers can still voluntarily recall vehicles, but major recalls are typically negotiated between the government and automakers.

ENVIRONMENT

At the Environmental Protection Agency, the shutdown means the agency can no longer certify whether vehicles meet emissions standards, delaying some new models from reaching car lots. New pesticides and industrial chemicals are also in limbo because the EPA has halted reviews of their health and environmental effects. And the nation’s environmental police are no longer checking to see if polluters are complying with agreements to reduce their pollution.

HEALTH

New patients are generally not being accepted into clinical research at the National Institutes of Health, but current patients continue to receive care. NIH has made exceptions to allow 12 patients with immediately life-threatening illnesses _ mostly cancer _ into research studies at its renowned hospital. Normally, about 200 new patients every week enroll in studies at the NIH’s research-only hospital, many of them after standard treatments have failed. Medical research at the NIH has been disrupted as some studies have been delayed. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has been severely limited in spotting or investigating disease outbreaks such as the flu or that mysterious MERS virus from the Middle East. The FDA has halted the review and approval of new medical products and drugs.

EDUCATION

The impact of the shutdown on school districts, colleges and universities has been relatively minimal. Student loans have continued to be paid out. But school trips to national parks and museums have been cancelled, and some university researchers have been unable to apply for grant funding or access government databases. If the shutdown lingers, however, districts and higher education institutions that rely on federal grants dollars to fund programs such as those for special education students could begin to feel the pinch.

LABOR ISSUES

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission will not investigate any charges of discrimination or respond to questions from the public during the shutdown. It will request delays in ongoing court proceedings and will not hold any hearings or mediations. The National Labor Relations Board, which investigates and remedies unfair labor practices, has virtually ceased to exist during the shutdown. More than 99 percent of its staff has been furloughed, postponing nearly every pending hearing, investigation and union election.
TAXES

The Internal Revenue Service says more than 12 million taxpayers who filed for automatic extensions in the spring have tax returns due on Tuesday. Those returns, the agency says, are still due, regardless of the shutdown.

The IRS suspended all audits and will not be processing any tax refunds during the shutdown. Got questions? Sorry, IRS call centers will not be staffed, though automated lines are still running.

ECONOMIC DATA

How well is the economy faring? That's harder to tell given the array of economic reports measuring the health of the nation's economy that have been postponed. The reports measure such things as monthly unemployment, inflation, imports and exports, and retail sales.

HOUSING

Some borrowers are finding it harder to close on their mortgages. The delays could worsen if the shutdown continues and possibly undercut the nation's housing recovery. Some lenders are having trouble confirming applicants' income tax returns and Social Security data due to government agency closures. Furloughs at the Federal Housing Administration are slowing the agency's processing of loans for some low- to moderate-income borrowers and first-time homebuyers. About 15 percent of new loans for home purchases are insured by the FHA. The Department of Housing and Urban Development won't be able to provide any additional payments to the nation's 3,300 public housing authorities during the shutdown, but those authorities should have enough money to continue providing rental assistance through the end of December.

WEATHER

The National Weather Service is forecasting weather and issuing warnings while the National Hurricane Center continues to track storms. The scientific work of the U.S. Geological Survey has been halted.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

The FBI estimates that about 80 percent of its 34,000 employees are working and says it is prepared to meet any immediate threats. However, activities are suspended for other, longer-term investigations of crimes. Training and other support functions have been slashed.

MILITARY

The military's 1.4 million active-duty personnel remain on duty. About half of the Defense Department's civilian employees were furloughed, but Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel ordered nearly all 350,000 back on the job. The shutdown created a ripple effect with some defense contractors. Lockheed Martin said Monday that it was furloughing about 2,400 workers. Top defense officials noted that critical programs and benefits remain halted. For example, the department does not have the authority to pay death gratuities for the survivors of service members killed in action — typically a cash payment of $100,000 within three days of the death of a service member. The Obama administration said Wednesday that a
private charity would pick up the costs of the payments during the shutdown and be reimbursed later. The military has also stopped providing tuition assistance for service members taking college courses during off-duty hours.

VETERANS SERVICES

Veterans are still able to get inpatient care at hospitals and mental health counseling at vet centers and outpatient clinics because Congress approved funding for VA health care programs one year in advance. Operators are also staffing the crisis hotline. The VA says its efforts to reduce the backlog in disability benefit claims have been stalled because claims processors are no longer being required to work 20 hours of overtime per month. Access to regional VA offices has been suspended, making it harder for veterans to get information about their benefits and the status of their claims. If the shutdown continues into late October, the VA warns that compensation and pension payments to veterans will be halted.

NATIONAL SECURITY

The CIA furloughed a "significant" but undisclosed number of workers when the shutdown began. A week later, CIA Director John Brennan said he would begin bringing back employees deemed necessary to the CIA's core missions of foreign intelligence collection, analysis, covert action and counterintelligence. He said continuing dramatically reduced staffing levels posed a threat to the safety of human life and the protection of property.

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Associated Press writers Kevin Freking, Sam Hananel, Joan Lowy, Matthew Daly, Frederic J. Frommer, Andrew Miga, Hope Yen, Deb Riechmann, Lauran Neergaard, Dina Cappiello, Pete Yost, Stephen Ohlemacher, Lolita C. Baldor, Jesse J. Holland, Seth Borenstein, Mary Clare Jalonick, Alicia A. Caldwell and Kim Hefling contributed to this report.
Amid the Shutdown's Gloom, Research Universities Mull the Path Ahead

By Andy Thomason

Washington

NO MU MENTION

Administrators, academics, and lobbyists gathered at the National Academy of Sciences Building on Thursday to plot a way forward for the nation's research universities—just as portents of dwindling federal support for their work loomed in the background.

The shutdown of the federal government, now more than a week old, claimed two of the convocation's prominent scheduled speakers: John P. Holdren, President Obama's science adviser, and Ernest J. Moniz, U.S. secretary of energy. To participants, their absence was a potent symbol.

"The federal government is stuck in the mud," said Hunter R. Rawlings III, president of the Association of American Universities, adding that the onus was now on research institutions to ensure their own survival.

"My confidence in our advocacy is waning," Mr. Rawlings said. "What we need to do, I believe, is to try as best we can to ensure that the country's research enterprise is not stuck in the mud."

The convocation occurred more than a year after the National Research Council released a report, prepared at the request of Congress, to assess the financial status of the country's research universities. Its recommendations focused largely on restoring federal and state funds for the institutions, but also coming to rely more on private and community partnerships.

The 'Value Proposition'
Attendees at Thursday's convocation proposed several actions, including articulating universities' "value proposition," to make lawmakers better aware of the number of jobs created through research and its role in preserving national security.

But much of the discussion dwelt not on solutions but on the problems facing research universities. Norman R. Augustine, a former chief executive of Lockheed Martin who has lobbied extensively for more federal support for scientific research, said a greater reliance on industry to finance research and development posed a problem.

"Industry focuses on 'D,' not on 'R,'" Mr. Augustine said, adding that publicly emphasizing the importance of research in economic development was crucial.

Shifting research universities' stance away from a plea for help is important, said Rep. Rush D. Holt, a New Jersey Democrat who is a former physicist. "Ask not what research universities can get from this country, but ask what research universities can give to this country," Mr. Holt told the audience.

The National Research Council report's recommendations, meant to be carried out over the next decade, include keeping universities' budget increases in line with the increase in the overall inflation rate, fully restoring state support for higher education, and having the federal government make good on a promise to double the basic-research budget of its science agencies, among other things.

While discussing possible action to fulfill the report's recommendations, several attendees proposed strategies aimed at crafting a simple, focused message on the importance of the research mission. Charles O. Holliday Jr., chairman of the panel that released the report, ended the convocation by asking all in attendance to personally do one thing to further the recommendations by Thanksgiving.
How to Respond to Govt. Shutdown? Talk About It, Says Higher-Education Lobby

By Eric Kelderman

Washington

The six major associations representing higher education on Thursday released a joint response to the federal-government shutdown. Instead of calling on lawmakers to resolve the situation, the groups suggest a sort-of nationwide teach-in as an antidote to the political dysfunction that threatens to throw the economy into a tailspin.

The joint response, in the form of a letter to the members of each association, appeared as groups across the political spectrum have begun calling for an end to the crisis, including organizations that typically back Republicans nationally, such as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. With the exception of a few dozen Republican members of Congress and their supporters, few seem to doubt the deep and difficult consequences of the shutdown and the potential economic fallout if Congress fails to raise the government's borrowing limit and the United States defaults on even some of its debt.

Now in its second week, the shutdown is already leaving a mark on colleges and their students and faculty members. Research projects have been interrupted, academic meetings have been postponed or canceled, and some students are being urged to put off their education until the federal-budget impasse ends.

But the letter from the six associations—the American Association of Community Colleges, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, the American Council on Education, the Association of American Universities, the Association of Public and Land-Grant...
Universities, and the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities—mentions none of that. Instead, the groups urge their members to make the most of a teachable moment.

"We call on higher-education institutions around the country to engage in conversations, lectures, and events, both on and off campus, that bring together students, business and community leaders, and the public," the letter says. "We should focus attention on the processes that ensure responsible government and sound budget policy."

"We are deeply concerned," the letter continues, "by the growing resignation of the American people to this 'new normal': the idea that Washington is so broken and dysfunctional that it cannot be fixed, only ignored or ridiculed."

'Beyond Dysfunctional'
The purpose of the letter was not to try to influence the debate on Capitol Hill, said Terry W. Hartle, senior vice president for government and public affairs at the American Council on Education, which represents some 1,800 institutions, including both two- and four-year colleges and private, public, and for-profit institutions.

"We have two jobs," he said. "Job 1 is explaining colleges to Congress. Job 2 is explaining Congress to colleges."

Higher education has a role in preparing informed citizens, Mr. Hartle said, and this generation of college students might see the current impasse as another manifestation of the hyperpartisanship that has dominated politics throughout their lives. But the budget stalemate goes way beyond that, he added: "I'm not sure what the word is for something beyond dysfunctional."

In addition, Mr. Hartle said, the associations didn't want to be seen as taking sides in a debate in which they have very little sway over the outcome.

"We certainly want an end to the shutdown," he said. "But it's hard to be engaged in that process and not seem to be taking sides. That's a losing proposition."
Moving Beyond Congress

October 11, 2013

BY
Michael Stratford

NO MU MENTION

WASHINGTON -- The leaders of American research universities may be well-advised to shift some of their energy away from lobbying Congress and focus more on partnerships with state governments and businesses, several higher education leaders said Thursday.

Research universities need more funding to remain competitive, they said, but given the political dysfunction in Washington it may be time to look outside of the federal government for support.

Leaders of research universities gathered here at an event sponsored by the National Academies to take stock of how the group’s wide-ranging report released last year had been received across the country and to identify priorities for carrying out its recommendations. The report, produced by the National Research Council, the policy arm of the National Academies, offered 10 broad suggestions for how research universities can remain competitive in the world.

Among the recommendations included in the report were calls for greater commitments from state and federal governments, better partnerships with the business community, and more efficiency and innovation at institutions themselves.

Thursday’s meeting came as the research community continues to feel the impact of a partial shutdown of the federal government. The inability of Congress to fund the government starting October 1 has halted new funding of research and, in some cases, stopped work on existing grants that require federal resources to continue. Highlighting the impact of the shutdown, two scheduled speakers from the government -- a White House science policy adviser and the U.S. energy secretary -- were forced to cancel their appearances at the event because of the lapse in funding.

Research universities are also still reeling from automatic federal spending cuts that slashed billions in funding earlier this year and have prompted layoffs at some institutions. Those spending cuts, known as the sequester, would be continued in all of the short-term funding proposals Congress is currently debating.
And further jeopardizing federal research funding is next Thursday’s deadline for Congress to either raise the nation’s borrowing authority or cause the government to start missing payments on its obligations. It’s not clear how the Treasury Department would manage such an unprecedented default or the extent to which it would prioritize the nation’s bills. But, higher education observers say, payments on federal research funding and student aid would probably take a back seat to U.S. bondholders and recipients of Social Security, Medicare and veterans’ benefits.

Against the backdrop of this dismal federal outlook for scientific research, Hunter Rawlings III, president of the Association of American Universities, told his colleagues Thursday that it was time to start looking away from Congress and toward state governments and business leaders to make investments in research.

“The federal government is stuck in the mud and it’s not going to get out for some time,” Rawlings said. Beyond the fiscal crises of the past several months, he said that Congress for years has shown “willful disregard” for the warnings from academics and business leaders about the need for more investment in research.

“My confidence in our advocacy is waning” at the federal level, Rawlings added. Although the leaders of research institutions should continue pressing Congress for more support, they should now focus their energy into building partnerships with state governments and businesses.

Rawlings said that after nearly a decade of cuts in funding to public higher education and research, the funding landscape in state legislatures was improving modestly. During this fiscal year, he said, 37 states boosted funding for public colleges, with a sizable share of those increases going towards research. He cited the example of New York City’s investment in a new technology campus for Cornell University and the governor of Connecticut’s plan to dedicate $1.5 billion to growing the science, technology, engineering, and math programs at the state’s university system.

The suggestion that states and the business community may be better allies for research universities than the federal government represents a sharp turnaround from how many higher education leaders were viewing the political landscape just several years ago. In 2011, several public university leaders, citing declining state support of their institutions, suggested that the federal government take on a more prominent role in funding research institutions, even to the point of providing basic operating support. That proposal struck some as far-fetched at the time, but given the austerity and instability of federal funding today, it seems even more implausible today.

Other higher education leaders Thursday spoke about the need for research institutions to do some self-reflection as well and strive to make themselves more productive and efficient.

“This is not just a matter of universities saying, ‘Well, just give us money, return to the good old days,’ ” said M. Peter McPherson, president of the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities. “Certainly, that needs to be done, but universities have an important role to play, too.”
McPherson said, for example, that research universities should consider borrowing the tools and models from well-run hospitals, which share a similar mission of reducing costs while increasing the quality of outputs.

Although there was an overarching emphasis on turning to state and business partners, research leaders still said they saw an important role in lobbying the federal government for resources. But such an approach ought to be targeted and carefully articulated to make clear links between research and themes that resonate with policymaker, such as national security or economic growth.

“This is probably not the right time to go to the federal government with a new agenda full of initiatives,” said Lee T. Todd Jr., the former president of the University of Kentucky. However, Todd added, that the research community may find success by promoting “outcomes-based research that address national needs.”

Another recommendation at the federal on which research leaders said they could move quickly and receive bipartisan support in Congress was to analyze and explore ways to reduce regulatory burdens on research institutions who receive federal research money.
Military Tuition On Hold

October 11, 2013

BY
Michael Stratford

NO MU MENTION

The U.S. military’s decision to stop paying financial aid for active-duty service members during the shutdown is jeopardizing their academic progress and forcing some to withdraw from classes, according to officials at colleges with large military populations.

Since October 1, branches of the armed forces have not processed existing applications for tuition assistance or authorized new requests. Military educational programs were not included in the law passed just before the shutdown that protects military pay from the shutdown. The Army said in a notice on its site that the tuition assistance program remains halted even though it ordered most civilian employees back to work over the weekend.

The Defense Department’s tuition assistance program last year provided about 300,000 service members with money to enroll in college courses. Eligible service members can receive a maximum of $250 per semester credit hour, with a $4,500 annual limit.

American Public University, one of the largest recipients of tuition assistance dollars, said it was encouraging students affected by the lapse in funding to enroll in courses starting next month instead of taking October classes.

If the government remains shut down this Friday, the university plans to drop all active-duty service members who were supposed to receive tuition assistance from October courses, unless they are able to secure other funding sources such as the GI Bill or federal financial aid programs administered by the Education Department, according to a spokesman, Brian Muys.

Muys declined to say how many students would be dropped or had already withdrawn from classes, but acknowledged that hundreds of students were being affected by the suspension of aid.

At the University of Phoenix, which also enrolls large numbers of service members, some students have also dropped out of classes, according to Ryan Rauzon, a spokesman. But he said
he couldn’t provide a precise number because it would constitute a material disclosure that the publicly traded company was not ready to make before its earnings call later this month.

Rauzon said that Phoenix was not charging students who were enrolled in classes but decided to drop out after the military rejected their requests for tuition assistance this month.

Officials at Central Texas College, where about a third of tuition revenue comes from the military’s tuition assistance program, said the impact of the shutdown on their students was growing by the day.

So far, 101 Army students had been rejected for tuition assistance and if the shutdown extends into next week, the university estimated that more than 500 additional students would be affected, according to Barbara Merlo, a college spokeswoman. Figures for service members in other branches of the military were not available, she said.

“Our staff worldwide is working with students to offer alternative sources of funding and to encourage them to pursue CLEP tests and other alternative ways of earning credit,” Central Texas College Chancellor Thomas Klinicar said in a statement, referring to the College Level Examination Program, which allows students to receive credit if they achieve minimum scores on a standardized test.

At the University of Maryland University College, a spokesman said that it was unclear how many of the 1,500 active service members registered for classes starting later this month were affected by the tuition assistance suspension, but that the university had extended its deadline for withdrawing from classes. The spokesman, Robert Ludwig, said that at least 60 M.B.A. students had chosen to withdraw.

Other institutions also said that they were working to accommodate service members who found themselves unable to afford classes without the benefit of military financial aid.

Although the shutdown has suspended education funding for students on active duty, the government has so far continued processing veterans’ education benefits. But that could change if the shutdown persists through the end of this month, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki told members of Congress Wednesday. If Congress does not fully fund the VA by the end of the month, the agency would have to stop paying veterans’ benefits, including education benefits, starting November 1, Shinseki said.

Northeastern University announced this week that it would cover the costs for any of its 100-plus active-duty service members who could not access funding because of the shutdown. National University also said that benefit would be available to its population of nearly 3,900 active-duty service members.

Ashford University said that it would cover the amount of tuition assistance that eligible service members would have received for students scheduled to start a course from October 1 through October 8.
Southern New Hampshire University announced that it, too, would follow suit and cover tuition assistance for active-duty military personnel.

“We are stepping up and covering the tuition for our enlisted students. Again,” SNHU president Paul LeBlanc wrote on Twitter. “House Republicans should be ashamed. Again.”

In an email, LeBlanc estimated that providing the benefit to service members would cost the institution about $500,000, adding that it “just just seems like the right thing to do in the face of the madness on Capitol Hill right now."

The tuition assistance program was in jeopardy earlier this year when branches of the military proposed reductions to the benefit as a result of mandatory budget cuts. Under pressure from service member advocates and members of Congress, the program was later restored.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Obesity examined: Health Ethics Conference talk at MU encourages compassion

By Tracey Goldner
October 10, 2013 | 11:03 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — There are no easy answers about how or why Americans struggle so much with their weight. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported in 2009-10 that 35.7 percent of the adult population was obese. That’s more than one-third of all American adults.

Anna Kirkland, an associate professor of women's studies at the University of Michigan, gave a presentation about obesity Thursday night at MU's Memorial Student Union.

Her talk focused on understanding environmental factors that lead to obesity and how weight discrimination affects people. The lecture hall was standing room only and attendees included MU nursing students, community members, health care professionals and professors, both active and retired.

Kirkland studied discrimination in law school. She wrote her dissertation for her doctoral degree in law on weight discrimination and has been studying it ever since. She has extensively interviewed people who qualify as obese in the United States.

Rather than placing blame on individuals, Kirkland said she believes it may be more useful to examine the environmental factors that lead to and sustain obesity, such as food deserts, agricultural and food policies and weight discrimination. She called these factors "obesogenic environments."

"There is extensive antipathy towards fat people/overweight people, whichever word you want to use, and that it has very significant effects and somewhat sadly, it can often
bring about weight gain," Kirkland said. "The stigma doesn't work because it promotes
the very thing that people are trying to stigmatize and help."

Kirkland acknowledged that while individual choice is important to consider, obesity
can be viewed from other perspectives. She asked the audience: Does poverty make
people overweight or does being overweight make people poor?

She encouraged individuals to avoid stigmatizing language and alarmist terminology,
such as "obesity pandemic" or "public health crisis." Fat panic and discrimination are
not effective, she said. She suggested health care workers and community members
cultivate empathy and compassion within this complex issue.

"I think that it was a very thorough and descriptive way that we have to deal with the
problem that obesity gives," said Boyd Terry, professor emeritus in the division of burn
and wound surgery at the MU School of Medicine. He and his wife, Carolyn Terry, a
retired pediatrician, worked with obese patients for decades as health care professionals.

Addressing the compassion issue that obesity presents, Carolyn Terry said: "If you think
it's hard to be a heavy adult, try being a heavy child."

Kirkland's talk started off the Ninth Annual Health Ethics Conference. This year's theme
is "The Ethics of Obesity."

Supervising editor is Stephanie Ebbs.
MU Health Care opens expanded children's therapy center

By Hunter Woodall

October 10, 2013 | 8:02 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — The playground equipment was ready to be played with and the bounce house was inflated.

Benefactors, families and members of the MU health community gathered Thursday to celebrate the opening of the new MU Children's Hospital Therapy Center, with one of the first therapeutic rehabilitation playgrounds in the country, according to a press release from MU Health Care.

The $1 million center seeks to provide a greater amount of physical, occupational and speech therapy services for children in central Missouri, according to a release about the event.

A fire truck and refreshments were among the attractions available for visitors at Thursday's ribbon cutting ceremony, which also featured tours of the facility.

“We wanted to offer people a chance to see the new facility because it represents a major expansion of rehabilitation services for children in the Central Missouri community,” MU Health Care Spokesman Colin Planalp said.

Several prominent members of the hospital system gave brief remarks at the event. Timothy Fete, medical director of the MU Children’s Hospital, introduced the center and its usefulness to local and rural Missouri residents. He was introduced and followed by Kim Dohm, an occupational therapist who also serves as the clinical supervisor of rehabilitation services at the hospital.

Dohm said the 2,000 square-foot outdoor playground was among her favorite parts of the new center. According to the release, the playground cost about $270,000.
“I definitely had a vision for what it would look like, every inch is planned,” Dohm said.

Dohm said the center is now serving 285 patients a week, up from the roughly 230 the center was serving when it first opened in September. The center’s goal is to be serving 400 patients a week by June, Dohm said, but she is hopeful the center will be able to pass that goal before then. Thursday’s ceremony allowed Dohm to see the park she had envisioned for the past four years open.

“I feel like I’m floating,” Dohm said. “The main joy I’ve taken is from seeing all the kids having fun on the playground.”

* Supervising editor is *Stephanie Ebbs*. 
Communications tower planned for Battle High area

MU Mention pg 2

Structure could offer Internet.

By Catherine Martin

Thursday, October 10, 2013 at 2:00 pm Comments (2)

Columbia Public Schools is considering building a communications tower near Battle High School to fulfill a Boone County requirement for emergency responder radio signal coverage and also to allow the district to offer affordable Internet to Battle families.

An appendix in the 2009 International Fire Code requires buildings to have adequate radio signal coverage for emergency responders. New construction must be compliant, and that includes Battle High School and the adjacent elementary school, set to open in 2015, Deputy Superintendent Nick Boren said.

During discussions about adding a communications tower to meet that requirement, administrators brought up the idea of also using the tower to provide Internet access to families in the area. That would allow Battle High students, who received iPad Minis this year, to have Wi-Fi so they can do homework on the devices.

"In many cases, they go home and can't afford access to the Internet," district Chief Financial Officer Linda Quinley said.

The district is looking to form a partnership with a provider to offer a low-cost or free Internet service to families as well as adequate equipment for emergency response systems. Administrators also are planning to find other vendors to pay rent to use the signal, which would reimburse the district for money it spends on the project.
The communications tower is estimated to cost $350,000, including a small access road and power. That cost was not factored into the price tag of Battle High School, which was funded by a $120 million bond issue approved by voters in 2010. The district wants to hold true to its bond promises, Quinley said, so that created a need for an alternative funding plan for the project.

The plan is to issue a request for proposal, or RFP, next week for vendors to provide Internet services for Battle families and vendors looking to rent access from the tower. The RFPs will be brought before the Columbia Board of Education in December.

"Once this funding is established, we will have assurance of the ability to meet the debt repayment required for the tower construction," read a statement on a document about the proposal.

The district would then issue another RFP in January for the design and build of the project and will make a recommendation to the board in April. The goal is for the project to be complete by August and repayment of debt to begin in March 2014.

Some finance committee members had hesitations about the plan. Tom Richards, finance committee member and treasurer and interim vice president of finance for the University of Missouri System, asked why the district doesn't let a private vendor handle the tower project. "We have not had any takers," Deputy Superintendent Nick Boren said.

Offering free or low-cost Internet to families at one school but not all schools also creates a dilemma, Richards said. "Politics are something the board will have to wrestle with," Quinley replied.

Committee and school board member Darin Preis brought up a board decision last month to not approve a contract for the district to fund the Walking School Bus program, with some board members having a concern that the program was not part of the district’s core mission. He wondered if members would have the same concerns about the communications tower proposal.

"It's an intriguing idea," he said, but it could "open the doors to ideology."

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