The Tribune's View
Tuition freeze

Linked to appropriations?

By Henry J. Waters III

Saturday, December 14, 2013 at 2:00 am

As Gov. Jay Nixon managed a difficult state budget during lean economic years, he linked higher education funding to tuition policies. Supporters of increasing revenue for colleges, including local legislative representatives, like the higher funding but object to pressure from the governor for limiting tuition.

Nixon's pressure, coupled with the natural parsimony of the Missouri General Assembly, has limited Missouri average tuition increases among four-year higher education institutions to only 5 percent since 2008, the lowest in the nation. The governor says this restraint keeps the economy growing and expands affordable education so students can "graduate without a heavy burden of debt."

Nixon's prescription is unassailable in principle and practice. Higher ed costs have risen inexorably over recent years. Even if one believes the additional costs produce increasing quality of instruction and facilities, affordability suffers. Levels of student aid and debt have risen.

And controlling tuition levels makes sense as a business plan. Relatively low tuition at MU is a major factor stimulating the strong enrollment growth seen in recent years, much of it from out of state. As student populations increase, local economic development grows apace, as we have seen locally.

But even if it makes sense for MU and other four-year universities to restrain tuition levels, the governor should not bludgeon the institutions with threats of withheld funds, so say local state representatives Chris Kelly and Steve Webber. The two Democrats cite the constitutional independence of the University of Missouri as reason Nixon should keep hands off.
Their most recent comment comes in reaction to Nixon’s welcome plan to increase funding by 5 percent and his unwelcome request that tuitions remain frozen.

Webber believes the state should put as much money as possible into education and the university should keep tuition as low as possible, but “the two things should be independent of each other.” Kelly says it’s up to university curators to set tuition and “it’s not our business.”

This is a fluid game in progress. The governor can bring pressure for tuition control without violating the state constitution. He has the authority to affect funding levels. Whether he does this to lever tuition restraint is a political issue. He can't overtly order university policies.

Can he link his legitimate control over the budget to tuition levels? Unless a governor does so more egregiously than Nixon is doing, I doubt any court would find him in violation of the university's constitutional independence.

Right here, all hands must recognize I have not yet been appointed to the state’s high court and am not likely to receive the honor anytime soon. However, as one of the world's leading curbstone lawyers, I reckon the invocation of the constitution in the current discussion is more a political than a legal matter.

Nixon will not want to look like a tyrant trampling on the constitutional letter if not the law, but his admonition about tuition restraint makes sense. UM curators already had decided to raise tuitions by 1.7 percent next year. Now that Gov. Nixon promises a 5 percent increase in state funding, UM President Tim Wolfe says he and his colleagues will think about it.

Even with the promised increase, state appropriations will remain below peak levels received in fiscal 2010. University officials have a reasonable argument so long as state support is weak tuition increases will have to be on the table.

P.S.: Nixon says the amount of increase given each school will depend on five performance measures, a rating system bound to raise worries on campus and sure to evoke complaints from relative institutional losers.

The dance continues and the accompanying music is somewhat sweeter. State revenues are on the upswing and politicians proclaim education funding is a top priority. But as long as the debate involves direct imperatives from the governor’s office, it's too early for “Kumbaya.”

**HJW III**

The grass is not, in fact, always greener on the other side of the fence. Fences have nothing to do with it. The grass is greenest where it is watered. When crossing over fences, carry water with you and tend the grass wherever you may be.

— ROBERT FULGHUM, WRITER
Advice is always on the menu at graduation time, and the 69 students who received degrees on Saturday from MU's School of Natural Resources were served three helpings.

They were told to pause occasionally on their way through life, use their imaginations and adopt a positive attitude.

Mark Ryan, director of the school, reminded students that he had handed them each a pin as they entered Jesse Auditorium. It was a "pause button," he said as he gave the graduates what he called their "last lecture."

"The more you rush from activity to activity, from your iPhone to a meeting and back to your iPad, to your child's soccer game, the more you risk being too busy to think," Ryan said.

The students who received their degrees during the evening ceremony were among the last of more than 2,300 students who received 2,436 degrees during winter commencement ceremonies. The numbers don't match because some students, such as Morgan Schmalz of Kansas City, received two degrees.

Schmalz, who decorated her graduation cap with an owl nested in green tissue and construction paper, said she won't have time to pause as she moves out of her Columbia apartment and begins looking for a job. She received a Bachelor of Science degree in forestry and another in fisheries and wildlife. "I am not really sure, as of right now," she said of her plans.

The advice for dealing with uncertainty, from commencement speaker Walter Bargen of Ashland, was to "use your imagination as a natural resource."
Bargen, Missouri's first poet laureate, drew on other poets as well as philosophers and scientists to emphasize to the graduates the importance of bringing imagination to the work the university has trained them for. Poetry is one of the oldest forms of communication, Bargen said, and it gave rise to philosophy, which in turn gave rise to science.

"You have to see with your imagination in order to expand your perspective," Bargen said after reading the poem "Wild Geese" by Mary Oliver. "Whoever you are, no matter how lonely, the world offers itself to your imagination. To think any smaller, and in any smaller terms than the world, is incomplete and perhaps dangerous."

Poetry will help open their imagination to the world, Bargen said. It combines the universal with the particular and provides meaning for both.

"What a balancing act you stewards of the planet must walk between the few and the many, remembering that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, but that each part is invaluable," he said.

Along with students who study the soil, air, water and forests, the School of Natural Resources prepares students in the fields of sports and recreation management. Thomas Payne, dean of the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources, told the graduates that a positive attitude and avoiding the "Three Bs" — bragging, blaming and bellyaching — would make life a little easier.

"Believe me, it will make a difference in you and in the people you are around," he said.

This article was published in the Sunday, December 15, 2013 edition of the Columbia Daily Tribune with the headline "EMBRACING SUCCESS: Poet extols power of imagination."
Transitions: U. of Louisiana System Chooses Provost; NIH Names Associate Director for Data Science

JOB MOVES

Martha J. Kanter, who stepped down as under secretary of education at the U.S. Department of Education this month, will be a visiting professor of higher education at New York University's Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development. Her two-year appointment will begin next month.

Philip E. Bourne, associate vice chancellor for innovation and industry alliances and a professor of structural bioinformatics and systems pharmacology at the University of California at San Diego, will become the first permanent associate director for data science at the National Institutes of Health in early 2014.

R. Bowen Loftin, who said last summer that he would step down as president of Texas A&M University at College Station in January, will become the next chancellor of the University of Missouri at Columbia in February.

E. Gordon Gee, president emeritus of Ohio State University, will become president of West Virginia University on an interim basis in early January and fill the post until a new president is named. He will replace James P. Clements, who will take over as president of Clemson University next month. Mr. Gee served as West Virginia University's president once before, from 1981 to 1985.
Karla Hughes, provost and vice president for academic affairs at Morehead State University, in Kentucky, will become the University of Louisiana system's executive vice president and provost next month.

Yann LeCun, a professor at New York University's Courant Institute of Mathematical Sciences, next month will become director of a new Facebook laboratory that will do research in artificial intelligence. He will remain a professor at NYU part time but will step down from his position as director of the university's Center for Data Science.

David Carr, media columnist for The New York Times, will become a part-time professor next month in Boston University's College of Communication. He is expected to analyze new business models that can support serious journalism. Beginning next fall, he will teach a course each semester. He will continue to be on the staff of the Times.

IN MEMORIAM

José Esteban Muñoz, a professor of performance studies at New York University, died on December 3. He was 46. He is known for two influential books, Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics and Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity. Ken Wissoker, Duke University Press's editorial director, says Mr. Muñoz was a few months away from completing a book for the press on the sense of "brownness," which the late professor had said "describes an expansive sense of the world," a feeling of commonality "that surpasses the limits of the individual and the subject." Mr. Wissoker says he expects that the book will be published.

Cynthia Eagle Russett, a professor of history at Yale, died in New Haven, Conn., on December 5, after a battle with multiple myeloma. She was 76. She began as a lecturer at Yale in 1967 and taught there until 2012. Among her interests were women's history and the effect of science on nonscientific culture. Her books include Sexual Science: The Victorian Construction of Womanhood.
Two University of Missouri computer science students were arrested Dec. 6 for allegedly installing a program on a public computer without authorization, MU police Capt. Brian Weimer said.

The two students, ages 22 and 23, haven't been charged. Their alleged misdeeds stem from the unauthorized use of the computer and that afterward, other students weren't able to access the machine, Weimer said.

Weimer would not disclose details about the program or what it was meant to do, but the Columbia Missourian yesterday reported the students allegedly installed the program to mine digital currency called Bitcoins.

Police said the duo installed the program between 3:30 and 9 p.m. Dec. 4 at Walter Williams Hall, 31 S. Ninth St.

The university's Information Technology Department alerted police Dec. 6, and the two were arrested and released on a summons after they were interviewed at the station, Weimer said.

Boone County Assistant Prosecuting Attorney Brouck Jacobs said he had received no paperwork about the incident.

The students have 30 days from their arrest to appear in court, and at that time, Jacobs said, the prosecutor assigned to the case will decide whether to charge them.

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Posted in Crime on Friday, December 13, 2013 2:00 pm.
Illinois, Missouri health information networks reach deal

MU Health Care not part of the network.

By Jodie Jackson Jr.

Saturday, December 14, 2013 at 2:00 am

An agreement between the official health information exchanges in Missouri and Illinois has expanded the ability of many health systems and physicians in both states to access patient electronic health records.

"Health care does not neatly follow state borders, so information about patients needs to follow them wherever they go," said Paul Recarey, executive director of the Illinois Health Information Exchange. He said the agreement will allow health care providers from either state to have access to "critically important patient data" whether the health records originate in Missouri or Illinois.

While the agreement adds the Illinois health information exchange to the Missouri system that already includes its Kansas counterpart, the Missouri network still does not include University of Missouri Health Care and the patient information network managed by the Tiger Institute Health Alliance formed in 2010.

The Missouri health information network, created in September 2012 through Missouri Health Connection, includes Columbia's Boone Hospital Center — part of the BJC HealthCare family and its 13 hospitals and multiple community health locations. The MHC network includes 62 hospitals — including SSM Health Care and Mercy — and more than 7,000 physicians to account for service to 45 percent of the state's in-patient care.

The absence of MU Health Care from Columbia-based Missouri Health Connection — and BJC not being part of the Tiger Institute Health Alliance — means electronic health records are not connected between MU Health and Boone Hospital, even though the health systems are barely two miles apart.
Missouri Health Connection and MU Health appear to be at an impasse over whether each sees a possible agreement as equitable. Mary Jenkins, public relations manager for MU Health, said in an email that the university's health system wants an equitable data-sharing agreement similar to agreements it has with other health exchanges "given how important this is for patient care."

"We have made multiple attempts to share data at no cost with the Missouri Health Connection," Jenkins said.

Angie Bass, chief operating officer for Missouri Health Connection, or MHC, said its fees are based on the type and size of member organizations. She said MHC is not asking MU Health to do something other members are not doing.

Jenkins said MHC officials have presented an agreement that would charge MU Health Care for connecting to MHC's patient data "while accessing MU Health Care data for free." She said Tiger Institute Health Alliance members also pay to join the information network, but there is no additional cost to securely share data or to connect with other health information exchanges that are part of the alliance.

Bass said the fees need to equitable based on "whether they are a large, sophisticated system" or a small provider.

"We have certainly had conversations with the University of Missouri and the Tiger Institute, and continue to do so," Bass said, echoing statements made by MHC officials in March. "Our goal is to have them become a member on our network." She said other MHC members "would like to see that happen."

MHC is the state's officially recognized health information network.

Jenkins said the Tiger Institute alliance has data-sharing agreements with an information exchange that serves the Kansas City metro area and Kansas, and an information exchange in Oklahoma.

One of the primary aims of electronic health records and health information networks is to improve quality of care and increase patient safety by having the same patient information available from doctor to doctor. The electronically shared medical record information also is seen as an important step in reducing preventable errors and duplication of treatment.

This article was published in the Saturday, December 14, 2013 edition of the Columbia Daily Tribune with the headline "Illinois, Missouri share health records: MU Health Care not part of the network."

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Posted in Local on Saturday, December 14, 2013 2:00 am.
The Tribune's View
More infrastructure stuff

By Henry J. Waters III

Sunday, December 15, 2013 at 2:00 am

The city of Columbia will partner with a company called Enginuity Worldwide to test a promising biomass fuel called eCarb made from such waste plant materials as corn stover and switchgrass, long the dream of everyone seeking an alternative to ethanol as well as oil.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has given the company $500,000 to build a facility in Mid-Missouri to begin making fuel pellets. The University of Missouri is involved, and the city’s coal-fired power plant on Business Loop 70 would be the site of a test burn.

Using the old city coal burner is an important factor. It’s an ideal laboratory for the new product designed to burn in such aging, coal-burning pollution producers.

An earlier product made from a giant grass promoted by MFA Oil ignited prematurely. Initial testing shows eCarb works well in plants like ours, the very market the company hopes to exploit as old plants are required to transition away from coal. A company spokesman says the company plans to use the large variety of biomass resource available in Missouri.

A perfect solution? Not yet. The new fuel would cost the city $500 a ton compared with $125 for the MFA grass, and coal remains even cheaper. Columbia’s voter-approved renewable energy mandate makes this an attractive location for eCarb testing. Price competition will be an obvious hurdle, but first the product will have to work. We’ll give it a shot at our old faithful smoke belcher out on the business loop.

If trash plants can be turned into effective fuel, the market can grow and cost of production might plummet. Biomass pellet production might become the alternative fuel of the future, and ethanol distilleries can be turned to their highest and best use: making white whiskey.

HJW III
Ellis Ingram leaves legacy of increased diversity at MU School of Medicine

Although Dr. Ellis Ingram is retiring from the MU School of Medicine on Jan. 1, his office will stay open to anyone who needs him.

"I'm not going anywhere. I still want to be a resource," Ingram said. "I want to make sure I'm accessible to the students."

During Ingram's almost 40 years at MU, he has become known for his open-door policy that welcomes both students and faculty to come in and chat, said Dr. Les Hall, interim dean of the medical school. His dedication to students, warmth and leadership set him apart, said Dr. Lester Layfield, chairman of the Pathology and Anatomical Sciences Department.

"He has a gentle demeanor about him, but a strength of conviction when he speaks," said Hall, who has known Ingram for 15 years. "He has become an opinion leader for the entire campus."

Ingram is the senior associate dean for diversity and inclusion, associate medical director of MU Health Care's Cytopathology Laboratory, and associate professor of pathology and anatomical sciences. He went to MU to complete his residency in 1974 and stayed throughout his medical career.

He will retire from his positions in the Pathology and Anatomical Sciences Department on Jan. 1 and work part time for the dean's office until his position is filled. He is applying for emeritus status so that he can keep his university office.

Ingram joined MU at a time when few minorities were represented on the faculty. Even before he was appointed to the diversity post, Ingram worked "in his very quiet and professional way" to create a culture that welcomes everyone, Hall said.
One of Ingram’s favorite memories from his time at MU is sitting with other minority faculty in the chancellor's residence discussing diversity issues in the 1970s.

"He was a trailblazer," Hall said. "He said, 'I'm going to move to Columbia and make a difference.'"]
And he did. The number of African-American faculty in the School of Medicine has doubled in the past four years, Hall said.

"We're losing a great advocate for inclusiveness in medicine, both in teaching and practice," Layfield said.

Ingram also mentored hundreds of students, guiding them through career plans, life choices, family problems and plans for community improvement. Some of those students drove from Kansas City and other cities to attend his retirement celebration, Hall said.

Ingram has won multiple local and national awards for his mentoring and teaching, including the Presidential Award for Mentoring Excellence in 2003 from President George W. Bush.

"It's just my life," he said. "I define mentoring as having an ongoing positive influence on someone through a relationship. And that is what my life is about."

This support is especially important for students who don't have much support at home, Ingram said.

"You can instill in them a greater vision of who they can become and what they can do for the community," he said.
Once he's retired, Ingram will have more time to work with the organizations and students that previously had to wait until after work. When not working at MU, he tutors children at Granny's House, runs a science club for middle school students and mentors pre-med undergraduates.

"I'm 64, and, well, of course you could work forever, but there's a lot of work in the community that I want to devote more time to," he said.
Hall said one of his favorite memories of Ingram is when he found Ingram in the medical school one Saturday working with high school students and community leaders to identify Columbia's health problems.

Ingram doesn't mind spending part of his weekend at school. He just wants the next generation to be interested in science.

"You can give a heart to a 10-year-old kid and see them think they can become a heart surgeon," he said. "Those 'wow' moments are my favorite — when those students' eyes get wide and they realize what they can be."

Ingram is not only a professor, physician, founder of a nonprofit and mentor, but also a husband and a father.

One of the things he's looking forward to after his retirement is having more time to spend with his wife at their morning prayers.

"Not many people get that many things right in their life and do it with such grace," Hall said.
Girls on TV are always pretty on the outside

Spend a little time watching tween television shows and one thing quickly becomes apparent. The girl characters might be smart or ditzy, athletic or brainy, nice or mean, but above else, they are attractive.

Researchers at the University of Delaware and University of Missouri studied television shows on Nickelodeon, Disney and the Cartoon Network and found there were no unattractive girls on any of the shows. In addition, the girls often were portrayed as concerned about their looks or receiving comments about their appearance.

The reality is stretched further because many of the female actors on these tween shows are several years older than the characters they play.

Meanwhile, the researchers found boy characters had a range of looks, including some who were not so attractive.

For years, television shows have been criticized for unrealistic portrayals of girls and women. Those of us who grew up in the 1970s remember the perky TV moms on "The Brady Bunch" and "The Partridge Family." The only surprise is that 40 years later the situation hasn’t improved much.

Liz Atwood is a former Baltimore Sun features editor who teaches journalism at Hood College. She is the mother of two sons, ages 12 and 16.