Missouri senator introduces funding formula bill for higher education

Separate law requires formula to be created.

By Ashley Jost

Friday, January 10, 2014 at 2:00 pm

The sponsor of this year's vehicle for a higher education funding formula expects smoother sailing than in years past and an earlier push to get the legislation through the General Assembly to the governor's desk.

Senate Bill 492, sponsored by Sen. David Pearce, R-Warrensburg, was referred to the Senate Education Committee — which Pearce chairs — yesterday, the second day of the legislative session.

The bill seeks to comply with legislation signed into law by Gov. Jay Nixon in 2012 that requires a funding formula be implemented for higher education by 2015. A funding formula would shift the way public institutions of higher education are allocated money away from using previous year's funding as a base measure, as it has been in the past.

The issue of a funding formula is something Pearce said at least 30 other states are working toward or have implemented.

This year's bill, SB 492, mirrors the bill that ultimately passed the Senate last year — after much debate — in that none of the existing funding the universities received is factored into the formula. Instead, the formula looks at new funding. Ninety percent of new money is calculated on performance-based factors such as graduate and enrollment rates. The other 10 percent of new dollars a university acquires could be used as the institution sees fit.

The current draft of Senate Bill 492 will be replaced when it is heard in his committee, Pearce said. The draft doesn't include changes to funding that were agreed upon by stakeholders last
year. Pearce said that as soon as he realized the error, plans to create a substitute bill were made, and that substitute bill is what he will present to his committee.

Nixon hasn't yet proposed his 2015 budget, but he has indicated plans to increase funding for all colleges and universities by 5 percent as long as the schools do not raise tuition next year. The governor's entire funding plan will be unveiled during his State of the State speech Jan. 22, after which the appropriation process in the legislature begins.

A funding formula bill filed last year made it through the Senate during the final week of the session but wasn't heard by the House before adjournment. Pearce said he was pleased with the progress the bill made last year. Much of the discussion involved two organizations, the Council on Public Higher Education and the Missouri Community College Association, as they represent most, if not all, colleges and universities that receive public funding.

Paul Wagner, the higher education council's executive director, said agreements are working well so far on the issue. The group represents the 13 public, four-year universities in Missouri.

Rep. Mike Thomson, R-Maryville, plans to submit similar a bill in the House next week.

"I've consulted with four-years and two-year schools and the governor's office, and I hope we have something here," Thomson said.

Thomson said although members of the House Higher Education Committee are aware of the funding formula discussion, many others are still strangers to the idea, so getting other representatives up to speed will be a task for the coming weeks.

This article was published in the Friday, January 10, 2014 edition of the Columbia Daily Tribune with the headline "Higher ed funding bill introduced: Separate law requires formula to be created."

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Posted in Education, Politics on Friday, January 10, 2014 2:00 pm.
ANALYSIS: Missouri governor, lawmakers disagree over state's budget

Monday, January 13, 2014 | 6:00 a.m. CST
BY DAVID A. LIEB, THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

JEFFERSON CITY — Gov. Jay Nixon says he is optimistic. Missouri legislative leaders say they are realistic.

For the first time in a decade, Missouri’s top officials can't agree on how much money will be available for the state budget.

The disagreement is expected to lead to instant disapproval from Republican lawmakers when the Democratic governor presents his budget as part of his annual State of the State address Jan. 21.

Legislators already are making plans to cut the governor's optimistic budget plan. That will mark a reversal of recent circumstances, in which Nixon has regularly cut the budgets passed by lawmakers while asserting he's simply being realistic about the state's finances.

The current budgetary dispute stems from different assumptions about the growth of Missouri's economy. But it also is rooted in different interpretations of a Missouri constitutional provision that allows governors to control state spending.

The bottom line is that an optimistic revenue projection gives the governor greater flexibility to curb spending should the money fall short. A more conservative revenue projection reserves a say for the legislature if tax revenues surge higher.

For more than two decades, Missouri has used a process in which economists and budget analysts from the House, Senate, governor's administration and MU each attempt to project future state tax revenues
based on a variety of economic factors. They then meet and work out a "consensus revenue estimate" — a figure that serves as the basis for the budget.

This year, the Republican-led House and Senate announced a partial consensus. Leaders of the two legislative chambers agreed on a general revenue figure of $8.59 billion for the 2015 fiscal year that starts July 1 — a growth of 4.2 percent over the current year. The governor's administration wanted a revenue projection of $8.73 billion — a growth of 5.9 percent.

Legislators insist their figure is the most accurate.

"It's trying to provide a realistic estimate as to what we think is going to come in next year," said Senate President Pro Tem Tom Dempsey, R-St. Charles.

Nixon notes that unemployment has fallen and the stock market has risen to record highs.

"I'm optimistic about our economy," the governor said. Even with a higher revenue projection, "I'm going to propose a fiscally responsible budget that protects taxpayers and core state services," Nixon added.

The governor already has outlined more than $70 million of higher education funding increases to be proposed in his budget. He also plans to propose a "significant down payment" on closing a $600 million funding gap for public schools.

Nixon's optimism for the next budget year comes even though he apparently is more pessimistic than lawmakers about Missouri's current finances. Nixon continues to block $134 million of expenditures authorized by lawmakers for maintenance at state facilities, improvements at parks and construction of a new office building in Jefferson City.

The Missouri Constitution gives governors the power to control the rate of expenditures and allows them to make cuts when revenues fall below projections. Nixon frequently cites his conservative fiscal management while cutting the budget.

"(Legislators) have in many years that I've been governor put more spending authority in the budget than existed dollars in the treasury," Nixon said.
Nixon has cited the provision about controlling the rate of spending to withhold money from certain projects even when revenues aren't plummeting. That's frustrated lawmakers, who claim Nixon is taking his budgetary powers too far. "We're going to have to get some control over Governor Nixon's unconstitutional budget-withholding abuse," said House Speaker Tim Jones, R-Eureka.

By using a more conservative revenue projection for the 2015 budget, lawmakers could limit Nixon's ability to cite revenue uncertainty as a reason for cutting spending on legislatively approved projects that he doesn't like.

Governors can only cut, not add to, the budgets passed by lawmakers. So if the legislature's revenue projections turn out to be too low, the additional money would remain in Missouri's bank account and carry over for lawmakers to include in the following budget.

If the legislature's budget results in a surplus, that could strengthen Republican arguments for an income tax cut against Nixon's claims that it would jeopardize funding for essential services. Conversely, an optimistic revenue forecast could allow Nixon to propose funding increases for education that he could cite as examples of opportunities lost if a tax cut were to be enacted.

MU School of Medicine expands pre-admission program
January 10, 2014  BY Abby Kass

COLUMBIA, Mo.--The University of Missouri School of Medicine has decided to expand the Bryant Scholars pre-admission program that teaches students to practice in rural areas of Missouri. The program has grown since its start in 1995, now offered by 13 institutions across the state.

“Students with rural backgrounds are more likely to practice in these underserved areas when compared to their classmates from urban areas,” said Kathleen Quinn, acting associate dean for rural health. “Our rural track program is uniquely positioned to support MU’s rural mission and benefit interested students by helping train and prepare them for practice in rural communities.”
With the expansion, students at Missouri Western State University in St. Joseph, William Jewell College in Liberty, Missouri Southern State University in Joplin, Westminster College in Fulton, Northwest Missouri State University in Maryville, University of Missouri-St. Louis and the University of Missouri-Kansas City can all partake in the program.

The Bryant Scholars pre-admission program is a collective effort between the colleges and universities in Missouri and the MU School of Medicine. Students who meet certain academic standards, participate in required activities and show ongoing professional conduct are pre-admitted to the medical school at MU.

The additional schools that allow applicants to the program are Drury University and Missouri State University in Springfield, Missouri University of Science and Technology in Rolla, Southeast Missouri State University in Cape Girardeau, Truman State University in Kirksville and the University of Missouri.

Missouri schools on magazine's list

Sunday, January 12, 2014 at 2:00 am

The University of Missouri, Columbia College and Stephens College made U.S. News and World Report's annual list of institutions that excel in online bachelor degree programs.

The report includes 11 Missouri schools on its online bachelor degree ranking, and ranked MU at No. 48, Columbia College at No. 69 and Stephens College at No. 186. The University of Missouri-St. Louis ranked highest of the Missouri schools at No. 34.

According to the report, MU also ranked No. 131 for an online graduate degree in education and No. 75 for an online degree in nursing. Columbia College ranked No. 90 for its online graduate degree in education as well as No. 95 for its online graduate business degree. Stephens College ranked No. 167 for its online business degree.

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Posted in Local on Sunday, January 12, 2014 2:00 am.
Missouri star Dorial Green-Beckham's arrest tied to drugs

Sarah Okeson, USA TODAY Sports
4:39 p.m. EST January 11, 2014

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. — University of Missouri football player Dorial Green-Beckham was arrested in Springfield after a traffic stop Friday in which police said marijuana was found.

The 20-year-old sophomore Springfield native and former Hillcrest High School star was taken to jail and then released as police pursue a charge of possession with intent to distribute a controlled substance, according to the Springfield police. The offense description in jail records is dist/del/manuf subst, a felony.

Prosecutors typically review arrests to decide if there is enough evidence to file formal charges.

Green-Beckham and two other men were arrested shortly before 10 p.m. Friday on Jefferson Street just north of Sunshine Street. No formal charges have been filed. Police wouldn't say what led to the traffic stop. The arrest is Green-Beckham's second marijuana-arrested arrest in 15 months.

Beckham's adoptive father, John Beckham, said he believes no charges will be filed against his son.

"After being interviewed he was released," Beckham said in a text message to the News-Leader. "We feel very confident that the investigation will result in no charges against Dorial. Dorial very much regrets being in this situation and our family looks forward to this being resolved."
The two other men arrested with Green-Beckham are John W. McDaniel, 22, and Patrick Prouty, 20, police said.

The police report, most of which is blacked out, describes the arrest as a "traffic stop resulting in the arrest of three subjects for distribution of C/S." Two other adults were also listed in the police report, but their names were blacked out. The report doesn't indicate what their involvement was.

McDaniel told the News-Leader that he was driving a Jeep when police pulled him over because the vehicle had expired tags. McDaniel said marijuana was in the back of the vehicle but that it didn't belong to him or Green-Beckham.

"This wasn't supposed to happen," said McDaniel, a 2009 graduate of Glendale High School who knows Green-Beckham from high school. "We were just driving, going to a friend's house."

Green-Beckham was brought in the jail at 10:45 p.m. and was out by 3:48 a.m., according to records from the Greene County Jail. He was initially placed under a 24-hour hold as the police pursued their case. However, after he was interviewed by authorities, a booking sheet contains this note: "hold released."

What that means is unclear.

Green-Beckham was arrested in October 2012 when he and two teammates were reportedly smoking pot in a campus parking lot near Memorial Stadium. Green-Beckham pleaded guilty to second-degree trespassing. He was suspended for one game.

Missouri athletic department policy dictates that an athlete who is charged with a felony is suspended from team activities until the case is resolved, and conviction of a felony leads to dismissal from the team.

Chad Moller, the Missouri team spokesman, said in an email that Green-Beckham has not been suspended. School is out of session until Jan. 21.

"We are aware of the situation and are working to learn more," Moller said.

Green-Beckham graduated from Hillcrest High School in 2012. He was the No. 1-rated football recruit in 2011 before he signed with Mizzou in February 2012, doing so in front of a live national TV audience at Hillcrest.
The wide receiver enjoyed a successful sophomore season at Mizzou this past year, as the Tigers won the East division of the Southeastern Conference, played for the SEC Championship and then beat Oklahoma State on Jan. 3 in the Cotton Bowl.

Green-Beckham family confident that Mizzou receiver won't be charged

By Dave Matter dmatter@post-dispatch.com 314-340-8508

AUBURN, Ala. • The family of Dorial Green-Beckham believes the University of Missouri wide receiver will not be charged with a crime following his arrest Friday night in Springfield, Mo., for alleged drug activity, his father, John Beckham, said Saturday.

"After being interviewed he was released," Beckham said in a text message to the Post-Dispatch. "We feel very confident that the investigation will result in no charges against Dorial. Dorial very much regrets being in this situation and our family looks forward to this being resolved."

Green-Beckham, 20, and two others were arrested after a traffic stop and taken into custody at the Greene County Jail after officers found about a pound of marijuana in their vehicle.

"It’s an ongoing investigation and we’re not going to comment now on the situation," a Springfield police spokesman said, declining to share further details.

Green-Beckham, John W. McDaniel, 22, and Patrick W. Prouty, 20, were arrested on suspicion of felony distribution of a controlled substance, Springfield police said in a news release.

All three suspects were released without bond pending further investigation and laboratory testing of the evidence, the release said.

Police pulled over McDaniel’s 1999 Jeep Cherokee when they noticed his plates had expired in October 2013. When they made contact with McDaniel, they detected the odor of marijuana coming from inside the vehicle. Officers found about a pound of marijuana and assorted drug paraphernalia.

Charges were not pressed at the time of the arrest. The investigation is ongoing, the release said.

This is Green-Beckham’s second drug-related arrest since he joined the Mizzou football program. In October 2012, he and two teammates were arrested in Columbia outside of Memorial Stadium on suspicion of marijuana possession.
Green-Beckham and receiver Levi Copelin later pleaded guilty to amended city violations of trespassing. Both players, along with linebacker Torey Boozer — who later quit the team — were suspended for the team’s next game.

MU athletics department spokesman Chad Moller said the school is aware of the latest arrest and learning more about the situation.

According to athletics department policy, an athlete who is charged with a felony is suspended from all team activities until the case is resolved.

A felony conviction means automatic dismissal. Green-Beckham, who played at Hillcrest High School in Springfield, is coming off a breakout sophomore season as he led the Tigers with 59 catches and 12 touchdown receptions to go along with 883 yards.

Green-Beckham arrested in Springfield

MU wideout was in car that contained pound of marijuana.

By David Morrison

Sunday, January 12, 2014 at 2:00 am Comments (6)

Police found about a pound of marijuana and other drug paraphernalia during a Friday night traffic stop that led to the arrest of Missouri sophomore wide receiver Dorial Green-Beckham and two others, according to the Springfield Police Department.

Green-Beckham, 20, was arrested and booked into the Greene County Jail on suspicion of distribution of a controlled substance along with John W. McDaniel, 22, and Patrick W. Prouty, 20.

Police said the stop was made after an officer noticed the license plate tab on the 1999 Jeep Cherokee driven by McDaniel had expired. When the officer approached the car, "he could smell an odor of marijuana inside the vehicle," the release said.
All three men were booked at the Greene County Jail on Friday night and released yesterday morning, "pending further investigation and the laboratory testing of physical evidence."

Possession of that amount of a controlled substance with intent to distribute constitutes a felony, if charged as such. No charges have been filed in the case. The release said the case is still under investigation and "no further details will be released at this time." The incident report listed two other "involved parties" but has all identifying information aside from their years of birth — 1986 and 1988 — redacted.

Green-Beckham tried to defend himself on Twitter last night.

"People judge before knowing what happen," Green-Beckham wrote. "Let's not judge me for what happen and don't saying anything to me to try to bring me down."

Green-Beckham's adoptive father, Joe Beckham, said in a text-message statement released to the Springfield News-Leader and St. Louis Post-Dispatch that the receiver's family is "very confident" the incident will not result in any charges filed against Green-Beckham. Missouri team spokesman Chad Moller, in a text, said the team is "aware of the situation and working to learn more."

Missouri athletic department policy dictates that an athlete who is charged with a felony is suspended from team activities until the case is resolved. A felony conviction leads to dismissal.

Green-Beckham, along with teammates Levi Copelin and Torey Boozer, was arrested outside Memorial Stadium on suspicion of possession of less than 35 grams of marijuana in October 2012, during his true freshman season. There are about 450 grams in a pound.

The three were suspended from the Tigers' 19-15 loss to Vanderbilt on Oct. 6, 2012 and later pleaded guilty to amended city trespassing violations. Boozer was dismissed from the team over the summer.

The 6-foot-6, 225-pound Green-Beckham was one of the top recruits in the nation coming out of Springfield Hillcrest High School, where Beckham is the head coach, in 2012. After an uneven freshman year, Green-Beckham led the Tigers with 59 catches and 12 touchdown receptions in 2013, also finishing second to L'Damian Washington with 883 receiving yards.

He became the first player in Missouri history to catch four touchdowns in a game when he did it against Kentucky, recorded a career-high 144 receiving yards in the Tigers' loss to Auburn in the Southeastern Conference Championship Game and set up the winning touchdown with a 27-yard catch on third down late in the Cotton Bowl against Oklahoma State.

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Posted in Mu Football on Sunday, January 12, 2014 2:00 am.
How Should Graduate School Change?

A dean discusses the future of doctoral-education reform

By Leonard Cassuto

I talk a lot in this column about how graduate programs might be run differently. The graduate enterprise faces a lot of problems, so there's plenty to talk about. But I don't run a graduate program, and we don't hear enough from the people who do.

There's a reason for that. Administrators can't dissociate themselves from their institutions when they speak. As any administrator will tell you, even the most casual remark can become the object of Kremlinological scrutiny and speculation.

With that concern in mind, I recently conducted an email interview with a dean who works with graduate education in the arts and sciences at a well-endowed private institution—let's call it Very Good University. He's a full professor who came up through the faculty ranks and was named a dean less than a decade ago. Because I've shielded his identity here, he was able to offer some bracing observations and sound prescriptions. Here is our exchange.

What sorts of changes would you like to see in American graduate study?

The biggest one is that our doctoral curricula need to be changed to acknowledge what has been true for a long time, which is that most of our Ph.D. students do not end up in tenure-track (or even full-time faculty) positions—and that many of those who do will be at institutions that are very, very different from the places where these Ph.D.'s are trained.

The changes will differ from program to program but might include different kinds of coursework, exams, and even dissertation structures. Right now we train students for the professoriate, and if something else works out, that's fine. We can serve our students and our society better by realizing their diverse futures and changing the training we offer accordingly.

The other necessary change: We need to think seriously about the cost of graduate education. There is a perception that graduate students are simply a cheap labor force for the university, and that universities are interested in graduate students only because they perform work as teachers and laboratory assistants cheaper than any one else.
At elite universities—or at least at elite private ones—that is simply not true, and I am glad that it is not. It is absolutely true that graduate students perform labor necessary for the university in a number of ways, but it is not cheap labor, nor should it be.

The cost of graduate education has repercussions for the humanities and social sciences, which is one reason you are seeing smaller admissions numbers and some program closings. It also has repercussions for the laboratory sciences, where I am seeing too many faculty members shift from taking on graduate students to hiring postdocs. Unfortunately, they regard postdocs as a less expensive and more stable alternative to graduate students, and postdocs come without the same burdens of education or job placement that otherwise fall on the faculty member who hires doctoral students.

I want to underline that I don't think that graduate programs should be cheaper, but we can't have an honest conversation about their future unless we acknowledge their cost.

What might those changes look like at your medium-size private university?

I am not sure. If I were, I'd be writing a white paper for the dean of our graduate school rather than talking with you. They would probably include coursework designed to prepare doctoral students for nonacademic careers, internship options, and even multiple dissertation options.

I have a sense of what this could look like in my own discipline, but this needs to be a collective conversation. Anyone can chart out a "vision" and write it up for The Chronicle. It's another thing altogether to make it work, starting from the ground up, at one's own university with the enthusiastic support of everyone involved. And most administrators and faculty are unwilling to engage in that work in a serious way until they see examples of similar changes in the very top programs in their fields.

Why does this kind of change have to start from the top?

Both faculty and administrators are extremely sensitive to the hierarchies of prestige that drive the academy. In most fields, the majority of faculty members who populate research universities have graduated from a handful of top programs—and they spend the rest of their careers trying to replicate those programs, get back to them, or both. They are worried about doing anything that diverges from what those top programs do, and will argue strongly that divergences place them at a competitive disadvantage in both recruiting and placing graduate students.

Administrators are just as much to blame as faculty for that state of collective anxiety. No matter what deans, provosts, and presidents say, we all rely too heavily on rankings and other comparative metrics that play directly into these conservative dynamics.

Is this a version of the "mini-me syndrome," in which advisers try to mold their graduate students in their own image, writ large?
That is certainly part of it. The desire to see your own scholarly passions continue through students you have trained is truly powerful, and administrators underestimate that desire at their peril. Of course we all want our faculty members to be passionate about their research, and graduate training is one way that faculty research makes an impact on the profession. But there are moments when the desire for scholarly replication can be troubling. The training of graduate students should fill a greater need than our personal desire for a legacy.

Graduate school is where we all become socialized into the academic profession. It sets the template for our expectations of what it means to be an academic. No matter how many years go by, most of us hold certain ideals in our mind and think graduate training should be based on those experiences.

And we build and run our programs accordingly?

Right. Faculty members often try to either recreate a graduate program that they attended or carve out their own institutional training ground by creating a new center. Even as the number of academic positions has receded over the past five years, the administration here has been bombarded with requests for new graduate programs.

Administrators, again, are not blameless in that dynamic. We overvalue new programs, centers, and so on, as a way of being able to tell a progressive story of institutional growth. Every research university trumpets "the new" loudly. No press release ever comes out and says, "We're doing things the same way as last year, because it is all working so well!"

The focus on vaguely defined "excellence" contributes to that behavior, because there is nothing to define "excellence" beyond the hierarchies that are already in place.

Administrators are worried about looking too different from their peers or from the institutions with which they would like to compare themselves. As much as they might talk about innovation or disruption, they are worried that if they look too different, they won't be playing the right game. Of course, that also means that they will never actually leapfrog into the top, because we are all trying to do the same thing.

That makes you more conservative in your own job?

Let's just say I wish I were more creative and ambitious. On the other hand, I share my faculty's skepticism of wide-eyed visionaries who don't appreciate the real complexities and challenges that we are facing.

You say that professors are too defensive and afraid of innovation. What do you mean? Can you give an example or two?

Faculty members are too quick to experience any proposed change as a loss. That is especially true in humanities fields, where the "crisis of the humanities" has made faculty nervous and
defensive. This temperament has made it difficult to take seriously proposals that could actually help sustain the programs they care about.

For instance, as cohorts get smaller in certain doctoral programs, it makes sense to think about combining them—to create both a broader intellectual community and better administrative support. But most faculty fear that kind of move—even if it could result in a newly defined and exciting intellectual community. They think it would erode the particular discipline to which they have devoted themselves.

Two other examples: First, nearly every private-university administrator I talk with says that the current state of language instruction is not sustainable. Most campuses think that they cannot continue to teach the languages they are teaching at their current levels while meeting expanding student demands in new fields (including languages that are more recently arrived in the curriculum). This is going to require some innovative and integrative solutions if we are going to provide graduate training in many fields, but the same administrators will tell you that it is hard to work with professors to resolve those problems, because they are so afraid of losing what they have now.

Second, we all know that we should change our graduate curricula across the board—from the laboratory sciences to the humanities—to reflect the fact that a diminishing number of our Ph.D.'s will work in tenure-track jobs. But how many departments have changed their requirements, introduced new classes, or rethought the structure of their dissertations?

Everyone is afraid that they will lose something by doing so, either because it will mean less time for their students in the lab or library, or because it will make their students less competitive, or because it will be interpreted by prospective recruits as an admission of weakness.

The long and short of what you say is that the conservatism of tenured faculty—which they learn from their tenured advisers before them—is hurting graduate students badly. It locks them into curricula and expectations that ill suit their prospects in today's world. How can we break out of this cycle?

It's not a cycle that we can break, but a structure that has limitations. We certainly can serve both our graduate students and our society better. Experimentation and innovation could have a significant effect, and small groups of tenured faculty members and administrators have the power to make these changes. The biggest barrier is our own collective fears and self-imposed conservatism.

But I see reasons for optimism. For example, the discussion of tracking Ph.D. placement in The Chronicle (and elsewhere) will have very healthy effects, and I think it is possible that we can, and should, create a future with a greater diversity of graduate programs, even if there are slightly fewer of them.
I also believe that the majority of faculty members who received their Ph.D.'s in the past 10 years are likely to take for granted that these changes are inevitable, and even desirable. For all of the challenges we've discussed, graduate education will be a necessary and vital component of the research university for at least, say, the next half-century. And I'm stopping there only because to go farther out than that is science fiction.

As we focus on the challenges, let's not forget that our current model of graduate training has been the source of tremendous creativity and innovation. For all the pessimism running through our conversation, the research university is still the most interesting, productive institution in American contemporary life—and what we have built in the American academy is truly remarkable. There's no other place I'd rather be.

College loans can trap unwary parents

By David Nicklaus dnicklaus@post-dispatch.com 314-340-8213

NO MU MENTION

Many college graduates carry a huge debt burden, but at least they have a couple of things going for them. Their education presumably has increased their earning power, and federal loan rules limit loan payments to no more than 10 percent of their income.

Moms and dads enjoy no such advantage when they borrow to finance a child’s education. Their own income probably isn’t growing when loan payments kick in, and the rules aren’t designed to keep payments affordable. If they fall behind on the loan in their retirement years, the government can grab part of their Social Security checks.

The federal Parent PLUS loan program becomes a debt trap for many low-income families, says a study published last week by the New America Foundation.

“Parents, because it’s an educational decision, are willing to borrow almost any amount of money so their child can go to college,” says the study’s author, Rachel Fishman.

Some colleges include Parent PLUS loans in a student’s financial-aid award letter, and show that aid will cover the entire cost of college. That, of course, is misleading: The loans must be repaid, at an interest rate that currently is 6.41 percent. (A 4.3 percent upfront fee makes the true cost even higher).

Like other student loans, PLUS loans usually can’t be discharged in bankruptcy. There’s no deferral or forgiveness, even if a parent loses a job or becomes ill.
In short, if you borrow it, you’d better know how you’re going to pay it back. Too many parents engage in a sort of magical thinking when it comes to paying for college.

“It’s like going to Thanksgiving dinner where your eyes are bigger than your stomach,” says Vicki Jacobson, director of the Center for Excellence in Financial Counseling at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. “Parents think they are going to pitch in and help, and a lot of times parents get into trouble.”

She encourages parents to be realistic about the resources available to pay for college — including the income needed to repay loans — and to consider less-expensive options such as community college.

Families often have an informal agreement that the child will eventually repay the parents’ loan, Jacobson said, but that goes out the window when the student finds it hard to pay his or her own debts.

“It can create a lot of family strife,” she says. “It always sounds like a good idea, but it’s a burden, and that’s why we see many people entering retirement still owing student loan debt.”

The government tightened the credit standards for Parent PLUS loans in 2011, causing parent borrowing to decline after a decade of rapid increases. The change was handled badly — it forced some students to drop out of school and caused a financial crunch at some historically black colleges such as Morehouse College — but Fishman says it was necessary.

Her study proposes further changes to the PLUS program, including capping loan amounts and tying them to a family’s income. That would help keep low-income families from accumulating tens of thousands of dollars in debt they can’t afford to repay.

Fishman would even favor scrapping Parent PLUS loans entirely and letting students themselves borrow more. At least the students’ repayment terms are flexible if they don’t have much income.

Parents get no such consideration. They need to realize that just because a loan comes from the government, that doesn’t mean it’s a good deal.
By Beckie Supiano

NO MENTION

At-risk young people who had a mentor aspired to attend college and enrolled at higher rates than did their peers without mentors. That’s according to a survey commissioned by the National Mentoring Partnership that was scheduled for release on Monday.

About three-quarters of at-risk young adults (ages 18 to 21) with a mentor reported that they had always planned to go to and graduate from college, compared with 56 percent of those who didn’t have a mentor.

Forty-five percent of at-risk young adults with a mentor said they were enrolled in college or were about to enroll, compared with 29 percent of those who didn’t have a mentor.

The survey asked young people about other outcomes, like their involvement in extracurricular activities, as well.

A report on the survey’s findings, “The Mentoring Effect: Young People’s Perspectives on the Outcomes and Availability of Mentoring,” was written by Civic Enterprises, a public-policy and strategy firm, in association with Hart Research Associates. It is based on a nationally representative survey of 1,109 young adults, ages 18 to 21, conducted in the summer of 2013.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Missouri university group studies hybrid crop varieties

ALLAHABAD: The delegation of 11 academicians from University of Missouri (MU) concluded their visit at the Sam Higginbottom Institute of Agriculture, Technology, and Sciences (SHIATS) on Thursday night.

The academic tour of India, explained the group leader Prof. Kattesh Katti, was meant to develop an understanding of India’s education scene and exploring possibilities of international co-operation. Dr. Katti is curator's professor of radiology and physics at MU while the delegation's co-leader was Jane Hawley, professor and department chair of textile and apparel management.

Recently, MU and the University of Arkansas teamed up to form a consortium of plant bio-imaging, said Cathy Cutler, research professor, Biomedical Group Research Reactor at MU. Their scientists will
benefit, she said, by examining the techniques used at SHIATS to develop heat-resistant varieties of rice and wheat. The consortium is looking at proteomic profile of plants that can cope with the stress of inadequate or excessive water, CO2, heat, or cold.

MU has been invited to partner with the African University of Western Cape in developing a Food Security Centre. This could dovetail with SHIATS’ plans to develop food processing programmes in Allahabad to preserve food that is otherwise wasted or undersold at great loss to producers.

The visitors were pleased to learn that collaboration between MU and SHIATS goes back to 80 years, when Prof Marsen Vaugh came to SHIATS to develop the department of agricultural engineering. His mission was to increase peasants' productivity, while making their lives less toilsome.

During their visit to Allahabad School of Education, the focus was to have an interaction with the faculty members and research scholars. Dr Linda B Bennett had an interaction on the teaching-learning process and curriculum of the various courses conducted in her College of Education. Dr Rajiv Darolia discussed the administrative skills and answered the questions put up by the students. Together they explored more about their curriculum, latest research, and practice in teaching and teacher-taught relationship faculty and students’ development.

Missouri lawmakers plot new strategy for defying federal gun laws

January 12
BY JORDAN SHAPIRO
Associated Press

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. — Having failed in an earlier effort to bar federal agents from enforcing gun regulations in Missouri, conservative lawmakers are trying a new tack this year: banding together with other like-minded states to defy certain federal laws at the same time.

Supporters believe it will be more difficult for the federal government to shrug off such statutes if more states act together.
Missouri's latest proposal, introduced this past week, would attempt to nullify certain federal gun control regulations from being enforced in the state and subject law enforcement officers to criminal and civil penalties for carrying out such policies.

The state's Republican-led Legislature came one vote shy of overriding Democratic Gov. Jay Nixon's veto of such a measure last year. This year's bill adds a new twist, delaying the effective date for several years to allow time for other states to join the cause.

"We continue to see the federal government overreach their rightful bounds, and if we can create a situation where we have some unity among states, then I think it puts us in a better position to make that argument," said Republican Sen. Brian Nieves, who is sponsoring the legislation.

Missouri's efforts came after President Barack Obama called for expanded federal background checks and a ban on assault weapons following deadly mass shootings at a Colorado theater and a Connecticut elementary school.

Courts have consistently ruled that states cannot nullify federal laws, but that hasn't stopped states from trying or ignoring them anyway. Last year, a federal appeals court struck down a 2009 Montana law that sought to prohibit federal regulation of guns that were manufactured in the state and remained within its borders.

A similar Kansas law that makes it a felony for a federal agent to attempt to enforce laws on guns made and owned in Kansas earned a rebuke from U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder.

**Peverill Squire, a political science professor and expert on state legislatures at the University of Missouri-Columbia, said Missouri's nullification plans would probably meet a similar fate in court, but that states could hope to send an indirect message to Congress by pushing such proposals.**

Republican leaders in Missouri and elsewhere say bringing other states along in the effort might lead to a different outcome.

"This can't be just a Missouri effort. There has to be a groundswell of support by the people — by other states as well — in order for us ultimately to be successful," said Republican Senate President Pro Tem Tom Dempsey.

There's a pattern for states to follow when rebuffing federal laws. Although possessing and distributing marijuana remains a federal crime, about 20 states now have laws that allow people to use marijuana for medical purposes, and the federal government has declined to challenge new laws in Colorado and Washington allowing recreational use of marijuana.
"The idea is that if you're standing alone against a federal law, then you're not as likely to have success than if you're standing with other states," said Arkansas Republican Rep. Bob Ballinger, who sponsored an unsuccessful attempt to prevent enforcement of federal gun control laws in his state.

Under the Missouri legislation, federal law enforcement officers could face misdemeanor charges punishable by up to a year in jail and a $1,000 fine for attempting to enforce federal laws considered to be "infringements on the right to keep and bear arms."

The bill cites no specific federal law, but the measure refers to taxes and fees, specifically levied against firearms, as well as tracking policies that have a "chilling effect" on gun ownership.

The provisions would take effect in January 2017 — or sooner, if at least four other states pass similar measures before then.

When the Legislature opened on Wednesday, Senate GOP leaders said passing a gun rights bill was a top priority for the legislative session. Like last year's bill, the new version would also reduce the age requirement for concealed carry permits from 21 to 19 and prohibit municipalities from passing ordinances to limit openly carrying a firearm.

Many Missouri Democrats are likely to oppose the measure again this year as an unconstitutional waste of the Legislature's time.

"The state will never trump federal laws," said Sen. Jamilah Nasheed, a St. Louis Democrat. "It is again another right wing Republican attempt to go Second Amendment crazy."

Residents can vote for Extension board

Friday, January 10, 2014 at 2:00 pm

Boone County residents can vote through Jan. 22 to elect 10 members of the Boone County University of Missouri Extension Council from a field of 14 candidates.
Voting is live now online at the Extension's website or through a paper ballot that can be picked up or received from the office.

Every council member serves a two-year term. There are 23 people on the council, 20 of which are elected and the other three being appointees.

Council members work with educational programs and finance management, as well as providing personnel for activities through the Extension, according to the website.

The 14 candidates vying for the 10 seats are Becky Bohlmeyer, Cheryl Brown, Alan Buchanan, Dan Downing, Nancy Franklin, Doreen Frappier, Jan Gorman-McAdams, Joyce Kemner, Tony Martin, Roger Morrison, Nancy Nelson, David Nolke, Melissa Quast and H.C. Russell Jr.

Ballots must be received by 4:30 p.m. Jan. 22 at the Extension office, 1012 N. Route UU.

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