Senate committee hears bill that could increase funding for Missouri universities

By Rudi Keller

Thursday, January 16, 2014 at 2:00 pm

JEFFERSON CITY — If Gov. Jay Nixon makes good Tuesday on his promise for increased higher education funding, the University of Missouri System would be in line for $20.5 million of new state aid if it received its traditional slice.

Nixon, however, has adopted the performance-based model put in place by the Coordinating Board for Higher Education to direct his proposed $36.7 million increase for the 13 schools. Meeting all five performance measures will mean a slightly larger share of that money, and failing to do so will mean a smaller portion. Over time, schools that consistently perform well would see their share of state funding increase, and those that do not would see it shrink.

The Senate Education Committee yesterday took a step toward making the system permanent. Chairman David Pearce, R-Warrensburg, has abandoned last year's plan for an overall funding formula in favor of using the performance measures. That decision, reached in negotiations with the schools, ended the opposition that blocked the more expansive proposal.

One aspect of last year's proposal that has been dropped would have used states with similar populations and available wealth to measure Missouri's state contribution to higher education.

Pearce told the committee that performance funding is an improvement over the past methods, which usually meant equal pain from cuts or equal shares of new funding. Political clout brought individual schools extras, which were often built into the base funding in future years.

"I think we can do better, and I don't think the status quo is what we need to consider," Pearce said.

Nixon used the performance model last year for the first time. UM received an appropriation of $407.5 million, an increase of $9.5 million. Because UM achieved all five of its performance
measures and some schools did not, it received $1.4 million more than if an across-the-board increase was given.

Under Pearce's bill, 90 percent of new funding would be based on the performance measures.

"This version is quite a bit improved from last year's bill, but we really do support it," said Paul Wagner of the Council on Public Higher Education, which represents all 13 four-year schools.

The council opposed last year's bill because it put a portion of each school's base funding at risk each year, he said.

The model uses four statewide measures, each with options, and one school-specific measure. They are:

- Student success and progress. A school can either measure the number of freshmen who become sophomores or the number of freshmen who complete 24 credit hours.
- Degree production. A school can either measure whether it is giving more degrees, year over year, or increasing the rate at which students graduate in six years or less.
- Quality of learning. A school can make a general assessment of student achievement, measure students' achievement in their majors or document the number of graduates who pass occupational or professional licensing tests.
- Financial responsibility. A school can look at whether it is increasing the portion of its budget spent on its core mission or whether it is keeping cost increases below the rate of inflation.

For its school-specific measure, the UM System measures whether it is increasing the money it receives from federal research and development grants.

The model is fair because schools are judged based on criteria they have chosen, Pearce said.

"The universities themselves get to come up with the standards that they are going to be judged upon, they are going to work toward that, and if they don't make the grade, they will be rewarded or not rewarded based on that."

This article was published in the Thursday, January 16, 2014 edition of the Columbia Daily Tribune with the headline "Bill would bring UM new funds: New model based on school performance."

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Posted in Local on Thursday, January 16, 2014 2:00 pm.
OBAMA URGES EXPANDING ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

• By JIM KUHNHENN

NO MU MENTION

Note from the MU News Bureau: Deputy Chancellor Mike Middleton attended the summit on behalf of the University of Missouri.

President Barack Obama tested his persuasive powers Thursday, summoning university presidents to the White House to win their commitments to expanding access to higher education and to demonstrate a new determination to use his own presidential authority in the face of legislative roadblocks.

Obama called on an assembly of college and university presidents and leaders of nonprofit and other education groups to rally around a goal of widening opportunities for disadvantaged students.

"We still have a long way to go to unlock the doors of higher education to more Americans and especially lower-income Americans," he said. "We're going to have to make sure they're ready to walk through those doors."

The event, which attracted more than 100 leaders in higher education, underscored both the power of the presidency to convene influential figures to bring about change as well as the limitations of a second-term president trying to drive sweeping changes in the face of a divided Congress.

The White House has increasingly been seeking ways to bypass Congress, an approach that can bring about results but that doesn't often have the breadth or the permanence of a law. Obama said his education initiatives are part of an effort to "make sure there are new ladders of opportunity to the middle class."

"I'm working with Congress where I can to accomplish this," he said. "But I'm also going to take action on my own if Congress is deadlocked."
Eager to put the White House’s stature behind the education push, Obama was joined by first lady Michelle Obama, who urged schools to actively reach out to low-income high schoolers to attract them to their campuses and to provide them with help once they decide to pursue a higher education.

Both the president and the first lady spoke in personal terms, saying they had benefited from a national commitment to expand opportunities for young people that led them to attend elite universities. Obama graduated from Columbia University and his wife from Princeton University, and both graduated from Harvard Law School.

"The truth is that if Princeton hadn’t found my brother as a basketball recruit, and if I hadn’t seen that he could succeed on a campus like that, it never would have occurred to me to apply to that school _ never," Mrs. Obama said. "And I know that there are so many kids out there just like me _ kids who have a world of potential, but maybe their parents never went to college or maybe they’ve never been encouraged to believe they could succeed there."

The daylong program at the White House featured a number of work sessions among White House and administration officials and educators. Numerous participants praised Obama for convening the meeting and said they are already seeing results from the preparation ahead of the event.

Debbie Bial, the president and founder of the youth leadership and college access program called the Posse Foundation, said that after speaking in November with Gene Sperling, director of the White House’s National Economic Council, her organization decided to double its science, technology, engineering, and math scholarships. By Thanksgiving, they had obtained $70 million in scholarships from 10 colleges and universities over the next five years.

"That’s what’s happened in the room. Everybody kind of thought, ‘What can we do to join this initiative, something extra, something more, something beyond what we’ve already done?’" she said.

Schools that participated in Thursday’s program have agreed to help low-income students connect with colleges that can meet their needs and then trying to ensure that they graduate. They also are seeking to ensure that lower-income students aren’t disadvantaged by lack of access to college advisers and inability to prepare for entrance exams like the SAT and ACT.

"By coming together and stepping up what we’re doing, we can go that much further," said Rebecca Blank, chancellor at University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Associated Press writers Stacy A. Anderson and Josh Lederman contributed to this report.
The Feel-Good Summit

January 17, 2014

BY
Michael Stratford

NO MU MENTION

Note from the MU News Bureau: Deputy Chancellor Mike Middleton attended the summit on behalf of the University of Missouri.

WASHINGTON -- President Obama and his administration have spent much of the past year pressing colleges to control their prices and contemplating new ways to hold them accountable, much to the consternation of campus leaders. On Thursday, though, he mostly praised them, and they returned the favor.

The events unfolded at a daylong White House summit that assembled more than 100 college president and dozens of other nonprofit, corporate and foundation leaders to discuss how to better recruit and graduate more students from low-income families.

While the president urged higher education to do more to expand access to such students, he (and key members of his administration) complimented college leaders on the commitments they had made in that direction -- commitments the administration had won with its invitations to the summit.

Wednesday’s summit was, politically, the administration’s latest effort to advance its agenda in a gridlocked Congress. Obama reiterated Wednesday that he had (and would use) a “pen to take executive actions where Congress won’t, and I’ve got a telephone to rally folks around the country on this mission.”

For college leaders, the price of admission to the event was to make a “new commitment” to helping more low-income students attend and complete college. More than 100 college presidents and 40 organizations made promises, which the White House unveiled Thursday.

He praised the new commitments by college leaders as “an extraordinary accomplishment,” adding that he “didn’t pass a bill to do it.”
**First Lady Advances Her Higher Ed Push**

Also speaking at Thursday’s event was First Lady Michelle Obama, who has adopted higher education as one of her policy priorities for the final few years of her husband’s administration. Addressing the college presidents on Thursday, she echoed her remarks from last fall, drawing on her own experiences as an underprivileged student in Chicago.

“If Princeton hadn’t found my brother as a basketball recruit, and if I hadn’t seen that he could succeed on a campus like that, it never would have occurred to me to apply to that school,” she said. “There are so many kids out there just like me -- kids who have a world of potential, but maybe their parents never went to college or maybe they’ve never been encouraged to believe they could succeed there.”

The First Lady praised the college presidents for their passion for helping young people thrive on their campuses, but she also made the case for why they need to expand efforts to graduate low-income, first-generation students. Doing so will not only improve the lives of those students but also strengthen institutions, she said.

“If you embrace and empower these students, and if you make sure they have good campus experiences,” she said. “Then they’re going to stay engaged with your school for decades after they graduate.”

“And they’ll be doing their part when fund-raising season rolls around,” she quipped, to laughter from the audience.

**Inequalities in College Advising**

Obama also used his address to discuss the importance of education in his own upbringing, something he has previously discussed at length. But he also drew on his current personal experience to draw a contrast between the inequitable quality of college advising that low-income students face.

“We don’t have a level playing field when it comes to so-called standardized tests” like the ACT and SAT, Obama said, describing the advantages that his own daughters enjoy attending their elite private high school here.

“Malia and Sasha, by the time they're in seventh grade at Sidwell School here, are already getting all kinds of advice” on preparing for college, he said. “The degree of preparation that many of our kids here are getting in advance of actually taking this test tilts the playing field. It's not fair. And it's gotten worse.”

Gene Sperling, the president’s top economic adviser who spearheaded the White House education summit, similarly highlighted the advantages that wealth confers to students during the college preparation process.
Among the most significant commitments that Obama highlighted in his remarks, and the administration underscored during the summit, was the doubling of the National College Advising Corps, a program that runs on the Teach for America model of recruiting recent college graduates to delve into underserved high schools and counsel students on how to prepare for and complete higher education. The program will add 129 advisers, which will expand its program by more than a third.

Enjoying the White House Attention

Several attendees praised the White House’s so-called “convening authority” as an effective way for the administration to extract commitments from colleges to do more to help low-income students.

"The president really did a great service by shining a bright light on this American crisis,” said Tim White, chancellor of the California State University System, adding that personal attention of the Obamas to low-income students will make a difference back in California.

"Holy cow, they really care about us," he predicted would be the response of some Cal State students. "That does motivate, particularly first-generation students."

White also said he appreciated that the tone of the event focused on cooperation rather than regulation or legislation, in contrast to many of the administrations other recent encounters with colleges.

The summit was viewed by some as largely a symbolic -- perhaps conciliatory -- gesture by a White House that has, on several occasions, drawn the ire of college presidents who reject the administration’s efforts to hold their feet to the fire on the rising price of college.

Issues of price and accountability for how institutions spend federal money was largely absent from Wednesday’s event, except for a passing reference in Obama’s remarks.

“The government is not going to be able to continually subsidize a system in which higher education inflation is going up faster than health care inflation,” the president said. “So I’ve laid out a plan to bring down costs and make sure students are not saddled with debt before they even start out in life.”

The most controversial part of that plan is a proposal to rate colleges based on the value they provide to students. The Education Department is pushing ahead with those plans, and next week plans to gather a group of “technical experts” in Washington to give specific feedback on how best to use technology and data to develop the ratings criteria.

Rather than focusing on those points of tension, however, the public portions of Thursday’s at times had the feel of a pep rally and were congenial throughout.

Sperling, in closing the summit, suggested that attendees send him and his White House colleagues recommendations and thoughts in advance of the president’s upcoming State of the
Union address -- a venue Obama has in previous years used to put colleges “on notice” about their rising tuition and propose accountability measures. He insinuated that a mention in the prominent speech could await those who have particularly innovative suggestions.

The event also allowed the dozens of participating campus leaders to use the stature of White House attention to bolster publicity for their campuses. College press offices eagerly shot out advisories about their commitments, and a handful of presidents held a news conference against the backdrop of the West Wing.

Presidents snapped photos of the President and First Lady on their phones and iPads. Several dozen presidents met with top administration officials in an off-the-record dinner sponsored by the Lumina Foundation on Wednesday night. And at least one enjoyed a trip to the conference on Air Force One.

All in all, the day was a lot more enjoyable for the college leaders than many of their recent encounters with the executive branch have been -- and some of their subsequent brushes are likely to be.

January 17, 2014

**College Leaders Leave White House Summit Inspired to Act**

By Kelly Field

Washington

**NO MU MENTION**

*Note from the MU News Bureau: Deputy Chancellor Mike Middleton attended the summit on behalf of the University of Missouri.*

President Obama and college presidents set aside their differences over his administration’s proposed college-rating system on Thursday, convening at the White House for a daylong summit on college access.
In a speech Mr. Obama made no mention of the system, which would judge institutions based on measures of access and affordability, and the proposal came up only a couple of times in conversations at the event.

Instead, the president and the 140 college leaders, business people, foundation heads, and nonprofit executives he had assembled for the summit focused on ways they could work together to get more low-income students into, and through, college.

Mr. Obama described the event as part of his administration's broader effort to spur change in the absence of cooperation from Congress. Later this month, he will convene business leaders for a similar summit, to discuss the long-term unemployed.

"I've got a pen to take executive actions where Congress won't, and I've got a telephone to rally folks around the country on this mission," he said. "Today is a great example of how, without a whole bunch of legislation, we can advance this agenda."

The summit was structured around a series of panels and small-group discussions in which attendees touted their own efforts to expand access and praised one another's. They talked about ways they might collaborate, and how to scale up successful programs.

In between the sessions, participants heard from the president and the first lady (see a related article), a business leader, and a governor. After lunch, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan spoke about the need to remake remedial education and the challenges of providing access while containing costs and ensuring educational quality.

"We know there are no silver bullets or easy solutions here," Mr. Duncan said. He called the more than 100 "commitments" that participants had brought to the summit a testament to the idea that "we can't let the difficulty of the challenges facing higher-education become an excuse for inaction."

**Wide-Ranging Commitments**

To attend the invitation-only summit, college presidents had to commit to expand college access. The pledges they made are wide-ranging, touching on nearly every aspect of college preparation,
access, persistence, and completion. As Mr. Duncan put it in his prepared remarks, "some of the commitments are small-bore, some are sweeping."

Of the 109 colleges and universities that made commitments, 62 were private four-year institutions, 36 were public four-year colleges, and 11 were community colleges. At more than 60 percent of the colleges, less than a quarter of students receive Pell Grants. Five community-college systems and five state-college systems also made pledges.

Private four-year institutions, which in 2012 enrolled 14 percent of the nation's undergraduates, were overrepresented among the institutions making commitments, accounting for 57 percent of the pledges. Community colleges, which served 38 percent of the nation's students, provided only 10 percent of the pledges.

Throughout Thursday's event, White House officials repeatedly stressed that the summit would not be a one-off event, with Gene B. Sperling, director of the National Economic Council, promising a follow-up summit in a year, to serve as "an action-forcing event." He added that mayors, governors, and business leaders might play a bigger role in the second summit.

In the meantime, Mr. Sperling said, the administration will hold a series of smaller, more focused gatherings and work to identify low-cost "universal practices" that colleges might adopt.

He asked attendees to send an email within 10 to 12 days detailing their future goals.

"This meeting will not be a success unless it's creating momentum and more action," he said.

'Not Just Another Meeting'
College leaders said they had left the event feeling impressed and inspired by the administration.

"It was not just another meeting" about the challenges facing higher education, said Mark D. Gearan, president of Hobart and William Smith Colleges. "God knows, we have enough of those."

Mark P. Becker, president of Georgia State University, concurred. "This is not just a feel-good initiative," he said. "This is a national priority."
Brice W. Harris, chancellor of the California Community Colleges, praised the administration for "putting their energy where their rhetoric's been."

Now "the colleges are going to have to deliver on the commitments, and that's not going to be easy," Mr. Harris said. "If we allow ourselves, we can get pulled off in a hundred different directions."

Kenneth L. Ender, president of Harper College, a community college in Illinois, said that while the federal government can act as a "catalyst" for change, the ultimate responsibility rests with the colleges.

"While we can describe the problems as being national," he said, "the solutions have got to be local."

Andy Thomason and Mark Keierleber contributed to this report.

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Dean Gabel addresses Columbia Women’s Network

Joan Gabel, dean of the University of Missouri Trulaske College of Business, addressed the Columbia Women’s Network on diversity inclusiveness at Peachtree Banquet Center Thursday, Jan. 16, 2014.

Gabel shared information on how the Trulaske College of Business strives to create an inclusive environment for students, staff and faculty, as well as how the college attempts to attract talent from diverse backgrounds.

She also shared a story from her own past as a lawyer. About 20 years ago, Gabel feared being “put on the mommy track,” and hid her pregnancy from employers for as long as possible. Even
after her pregnancy, she recalls a conversation in which her boss told her they would “put her back out there when she didn’t look like she’d just had a baby.”

At the time, she recalls being unfazed by the comment, but addressed the positive nature in which workplace relations have changed. “What was accepted then would not be okay today,” she said.

For more than 30 years, Women’s Network of Columbia has striven to “enhance the personal and professional growth of business people and encourage participation and recognition of women in the community.” With more than 500 members, it is the largest division of the Columbia Chamber of Commerce.

Plaza Dental Group sponsored the event, which ran from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Each month, the Women’s Network of Columbia hosts a luncheon and speaker. The next luncheon will be held at Peachtree Banquet Center Feb. 20, 2014, at 11:30 a.m. Visit columbiamochamber.com or womensnetworkcomo.com to register in advance.

Women's Network hosts diversity speaker
Thursday, January 16, 2014 | 7:31 p.m. CST; updated 7:42 p.m. CST, Thursday, January 16, 2014
BY FRANCES WEBBER
COLUMBIA — Joan Gabel, dean of the Trulaske School of Business at MU, thinks the way women are treated in the workplace is different today than it was for women of previous generations.

Gabel spoke Thursday as a guest speaker at the monthly luncheon of the Women’s Network, a group of about 500 Columbia businesswomen that seeks to promote the personal and professional growth of businesspeople in the Columbia area.

She told the story of a role model of hers who faced resistance to her as a woman in the workplace. Co-workers belittled her or put up obstacles that made it difficult for her to advance her career.

Things have improved, Gabel said, using her own experience as an example.
"I didn't have to bulldoze," Gabel said.

Still, Gabel said, despite progress in workplace equality for women, society might be inadvertently failing to give adequate respect to other kinds of differences in perspective, background or values.

In her talk, Gabel sought to address the question of why it's so hard to make progress on issues surrounding diversity.

"Diversity and inclusiveness is hard because it is a moving target," Gabel said. Demographics are constantly changing, and so are our perspectives on diversity, she said.

Gabel described her approach to increasing diversity within the School of Business as "purposeful and organic." The school is trying to recruit students, faculty and staff that broaden the spectrum of perspectives represented at the school.

Rather than trying to recruit any specific groups, the school would like to be more inclusive of under-represented minorities who have different life experiences and possibly come from different socioeconomic backgrounds, Gabel said.

The primary reason that minority students decide against coming to MU is the lack of scholarships, Gabel said. The business school is working to improve scholarship support for these students.

"This is not something you can make a quick fix to, that you can check a box," Gabel said.

Women's Network President Heather Hargrove appreciated Gabel's talk about diversity.

"It's not something we all think about every day," Hargrove said. Talks like Gabel's bring the issue back into focus and help those who don't face challenges of inclusiveness to keep an open mind, Hargrove said.

"I think we learn the most about being inclusive ... by being inclusive," Gabel said. She asked questions of the audience at the end of the talk, prompting audience members to share their stories of cultural change and improvements they had experienced.
Gabel said small groups are the best way to discuss these often uncomfortable issues because they allow for more open conversation.

The problems of diversity are so daunting, Gabel said, "All you can do is start."

Columbia to celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King with processions, service

Thursday, January 16, 2014 | 10:46 a.m. CST; updated 11:48 p.m. CST, Thursday, January 16, 2014

BY ANDREA JACKSON

MU Mention Page 2

COLUMBIA — Celebrations of Martin Luther King Jr. Day will kick off Saturday with two days of volunteer opportunities.

The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. led the movement for nonviolent social change from the mid-1950s until he was assassinated on April 4, 1968. A third generation minister at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta and a civil rights activist, King worked to end the legal practice of segregation.

King’s birthday became a federal holiday in 1983. It is celebrated on the third Monday in January. City offices will be closed Jan. 20 in observance.

Below is a list of free events in Columbia celebrating King's legacy.

MLK Day of Service
The City of Columbia Volunteer Program has opportunities for eco-cleanups or one-time litter pickups. When: Saturday and Sunday

For more information, call 573-874-6271 or email volunteer@gocolumbiamo.com.
**NAACP Honors Martin Luther King Jr. at Battle Garden**

A gathering will be held at the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial at Battle Garden. There will be a motorcade procession to Second Baptist Church afterward. Regional NAACP Director Cameron Millbrook will be speaking.

*When: 11 a.m. Monday*

*Where: Battle Garden, 800 W. Stadium Blvd.; Second Missionary Baptist Church, 407 E. Broadway*

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**Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Candle Light March and Memorial Celebration**

The candlelight march will start at Douglass High School. The memorial celebration will be held at St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church.

*When: March starts at 6:30 p.m. Monday with the memorial celebration at 7 p.m.*

*Where: Douglass High School, 310 N. Providence; St. Paul AME Church, 501 Park Ave.*

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**MU Celebrates Martin Luther King Jr. 2014**

Hill Harper is the featured speaker for the MU Celebrates Martin Luther King Jr. 2014 event. Harper is the author of bestselling books, a spokesman for Big Brothers, Big Sisters and an actor on "CSI: NY."

*When: 7 p.m. Jan. 29, with a reception at 6 p.m.*

*Where: Missouri Theatre, 203 S. Ninth St.*

*Tickets are available at the Missouri Theatre and MSA/GPC Box Offices.*

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**Grant Elementary School, Middleton win diversity awards**

Thursday, January 16, 2014 | 8:50 a.m. CST; updated 11:51 p.m. CST, Thursday, January 16, 2014

**BY JOSH BENSON, PAIGE BLANKENBUEHLER**

**COLUMBIA** — Grant Elementary and Julie Middleton, director of organizational development at the MU Extension, were honored with group
and individual awards, respectively, at the 21st annual Columbia Values Diversity breakfast.

The theme of this year's event, the "Rich Tapestry of Diversity," paid tribute to the legacy of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. Nearly 900 people attended the celebration, said JJ Musgrove, director of the City of Columbia Office of Cultural Affairs.

The event, held at the Holiday Inn Executive Center, provided breakfast to attendees and included live music, a performance by Missouri Contemporary Ballet and the 17th annual Diversity Awards. Steve Pemberton was the keynote speaker.

"It's a lot bigger, and a lot more people have taken interest in the promotion of diversity," said Carl Lewis, who last attended the celebration eight years ago. "It's changed a lot, and I'm kind of wide-eyed taking it in."

Middleton: Sharing a history and collaborating with others
Middleton earned a diversity award for her service with many local organizations and her contributions as co-director and co-producer to "Battle: Change from Within," a documentary produced through the extension.

The documentary, which debuted at MU on Feb. 25, 2012, highlighted Eliot Battle, who became the first black employee at Hickman High School in 1960 and worked for racial equality in Columbia.

"Learning of Battle's stories and everything he had to give this community, I was just so delighted to be able to share that with the community," Middleton said.

Michael Ouart, director of the MU Extension, nominated Middleton for the honor.

"It means the world to me," she said. "You can do so much more as a team than you can as an individual, and I've always believed in working that way."

Grant Elementary: encouraging acceptance among diverse students
Several representatives from Grant Elementary accepted its award on behalf of the school Thursday morning.

"I can't wait to get back to school and share the good news with the students," Principal Jennifer Wingert said.
Grant Elementary's student body represents 27 countries and offers several programs to help international students adjust and to teach the value of diversity. For children who are having difficulty understanding curriculum because of communication barriers, there is an English Language Learners program. Other students are encouraged to join five available language clubs. Kids get to share an aspect of their individual upbringing in a weekly did-you-know session.

There is a multicultural focus, Wingert said. The school may be small but students come from many different countries and a wide variety of backgrounds. "I love that we have a system of support to enable kids to reach out for the resources that are there — with that, you really can overcome anything," school counselor Lena Sheets said.

**Anticipated speaker**

Musgrove's search for the celebration's keynote speaker was a long and rigorous ordeal, but when he came across Pemberton he knew he had found the one, he said.

"I knew if we could get him on stage that he would make an impact to our community in a way that we haven't had a speaker do before," Musgrove said.

Pemberton's background growing up in a foster care system with a mixed-racial background fostered his desire to connect people not by their appearance but by their thoughts, actions and varieties of backgrounds.

At a young age, Pemberton's differences were brought to his attention. He said foster care services had difficulty placing him because they "weren't sure if he belonged to a white or black family," he said.

"They were so concerned with what I was that they forgot who I was," he said.

Pemberton's message encouraged embracing people beyond outside appearances, dress and attitudes. He said regardless of background or ethnicity, "people don't look like their stories."

Sheets, as an educator and advocate for children, applauded Pemberton's presentation. "Showing a story of someone who actually overcame adversity really encourages kids," she said.
Columbia celebrates differences at annual diversity breakfast

MU Extension employee, elementary win awards.

MU mention pg. 2

By Ashley Jost

Thursday, January 16, 2014 at 2:00 pm

The story of a young boy's trials as an orphan in Boston and his unwillingness to let them hold him back from creating the life and family he didn't have was told to hundreds of community members Thursday morning during the Columbia Values Diversity Celebration.

Steve Pemberton, chief diversity officer and divisional vice president for Walgreens, received an honorary diversity award during the event for his accomplishments both in his personal life and in his career.

Pemberton remembers, during his childhood as an orphan, someone explaining to him that his physical appearance called into question what type of home he would belong in, "white or black." Pemberton is African-American with fair skin and blue eyes, and he had blond hair when he was a boy. He remembers not understanding why his appearance would be a factor in receiving the family he longed for.

Decades later, Pemberton has the family he wanted then. His memoirs are housed in a book, "A Chance in the World: An Orphan Boy, a Mysterious Past and How He Found a Place Called Home," and he now speaks about his experiences to people around the country.

Pemberton recalled meeting someone who had read his biography, saying the woman commented, "He doesn't look like his story," to which he replied, "Well, none of us look like our story."

Pemberton told the audience to embrace diversity.
"As a business leader, I can tell you that there is nothing more immutable than the rapid diversification of America," he said. "And our traditions as a great nation, and our future, are going to be directly connected to our ability to integrate diversity into our daily experiences and daily lives."

Julie Middleton, director of organizational development for the University of Missouri Extension, won one of the two Columbia Values Diversity Awards for her work in organizations such as Boys & Girls Club, The Food Bank for Central & Northeast Missouri, Delta Sigma Theta, the Show-Me State Games and the Columbia Public Schools Foundation, among other groups. This year was the third in a row that Middleton was nominated for the award.

"I'm really honored to be able to receive this," Middleton said after the ceremony. She said she is proud of being involved in the production of the documentary "Battle: Change from Within," which chronicles the history of Eliot Battle and the story of integration in Columbia.

The other award winner was Grant Elementary School, the first racially integrated Columbia elementary, which was honored for its historic commitment to diversity. Students at Grant represent 27 countries, and Principal Jen Wingert said the school's administrators, teachers and parents take every chance to explore and celebrate those cultural differences.

"We really invest in teaching about culture at Grant," Wingert said. "We have 330 kids, so we have a real chance to connect to each of them and teach them about the backgrounds of some of the other students."

This article was published in the Thursday, January 16, 2014 edition of the Columbia Daily Tribune with the headline "City celebrates difference: MU Extension employee, elementary win awards."

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