Mo. Senate endorses higher education performance funding bill

By Alex Stuckey astuckey@post-dispatch.com 573-556-6186

JEFFERSON CITY • Some of the state's higher education institutions post great numbers in graduation and loan default rates, while others do not. A bill that would hold institutions accountable for their performance was endorsed by Senate today.

The bill, sponsored by Sen. David Pearce, R-Warrensburg, would require public universities to establish five performance criteria. These criteria would be used to determine the amount of extra money an institution would receive when the state can increase college funding. It would expire in 2016.

The criteria, established with the help of the Department of Higher Education, must include job placement statistics and graduation and retention rates.

Job placement statistics as a performance measure may not be used during years when the state unemployment rate is higher than the previous calendar year's rate.

"I wanted to ensure that if we have a recession like the one we experienced in 2008, that we would not have to have the same kind of measurement," Sen. Maria Chappelle-Nadal, D-University City, said today. Chappelle-Nadal offered the amendment.

Missouri uses a similar formula to fund institutions now, but the bill would make it a law.

The state has about $800 million for higher education funding.

In Gov. Jay Nixon's State of the State address, he proposed allocating an average budget increase of 5 percent to four-year state universities through a performance funding model. For example, Lincoln University -- which met three of five performance goals -- would receive a 3.1 percent increase and the University of Missouri System -- which met all five performance goals -- would receive a 5.2 percent increase.

Pearce said his bill is a step in the right direction to make funding more rigorous.

However, Sen. Kurt Schaefer, R-Columbia, has expressed his concern that the bill is not enough. He added an amendment today that would make it abundantly clear the legislature can determine funding through this model.
"I don't want institutions to believe somehow they're locked in a (funding) formula," Schaefer said on the floor this morning.

Schaefer also voiced his apprehension that the schools -- with the help of the department -- were setting performance criteria rather than the legislature.

This session, Schaefer has made his opinion loud and clear: four-year state institutions should be held more accountable for their good and bad performances.

For example, Harris-Stowe State University has a six-year graduation rate of 9.5 percent and in 2013 had a loan default rate of 27.9 percent.

**On the other hand, University of Missouri-Columbia has a six-year graduation rate of 76.3 percent and in 2013 had a loan default rate of 6.1 percent.**

"There are 13 institutions competing for public money, some do a good job, others don't," Schaefer said at the Senate Appropriations Committee hearing last week. "This is the time to look at that."

Schaefer also believes that public institution governing boards should be consolidated. That was not incorporated in this bill.

The bill needs another vote before moving to the House.

(Senate Bill 492)
JEFFERSON CITY — The Missouri Senate gave first round approval to a bill designed to make higher education funding less subject to political whim, but not before adding provisions that would make the proposed new rules optional.

On a voice vote, the Senate approved the bill sponsored by Sen. David Pearce, R-Warrensburg, to use performance funding measures the basis of distributing new state aid to universities. When money is available to increase spending, 90 percent of the new funding would be awarded based on five performance measures.

“What this would do is make our universities more efficient and this would be a good way to evaluate our institutions,” Pearce said.

Lawmakers are facing a deadline for writing a formula for distributing higher education funding. Last year, Pearce attempted to write a formula to divide all state money, a system used for distributing aid to public schools. This year’s bill only deals with the way new appropriations are handled. Pearce’s plan has the backing of the universities, a change from their stance a year ago.

For decades, most higher education funding decisions have been based on how big a percentage to add — or deduct in lean years. For the second year, Gov. Jay Nixon proposed funding increases tied to performance. Pearce’s bill would adopt the system Nixon is using, which was developed by the Coordinating Board for Higher Education and the institutions.

Nixon proposed distributing about half the new money — $42.1 million — based on performance. The other half — $41.8 million — would go to targeted programs such as science and math education and training mental health workers. **The University of Missouri received a 5.2 percent boost for meeting all its performance measures and an additional 6 percent increase from the targeted funding.**

During debate, Sen. Kurt Schaefer, R-Columbia, added the language that would allow lawmakers to ignore the performance measures if they chose to do so. At the end of a recent Senate Appropriations Committee hearing, Schaefer said he wants to study whether the state should combine some of the 13 four-year universities.

If future lawmakers don’t have flexibility with state money, he said, it will be impossible to require changes at any school. “I am not talking about closing institutions,” he said “I am talking about consolidating institutions. I am convinced that the only way you can do the right thing for taxpayers in the State of Missouri when it comes to higher education is the appropriation process.”

Other amendments limited the use of performance funding criteria based on job placement after graduation. When unemployment is rising, the amendment from Sen. Maria Chappelle-Nadal would exempt schools from meeting that goal.

Another amendment, from Sen. Eric Schmitt, R-Glendale, limited the use of performance funding to two years, when its usefulness would be evaluated.
UM System supporters rally at the Capitol for Legislative Day

By Ashley Jost

Tuesday, February 18, 2014 at 2:00 pm

JEFFERSON CITY — Gov. Jay Nixon and University of Missouri System President Tim Wolfe advocated for higher education issues Tuesday as people descended on the Capitol for the 40th annual Legislative Day.

The event provides a chance for alumni, students and advocates of the UM System to visit the Capitol and talk with legislators about issues facing higher education, as well as to advocate for their programs.

To kick off the day's events, Nixon and Wolfe spoke as part of a rally this morning. They addressed funding and initiatives related to science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

"We're asking that core appropriations reflect the priorities," Wolfe said.

He suggested audience members discuss the importance of appropriations, as well as the investment in infrastructure with their legislators. Currently there is a $1.3 billion need for maintenance and repairs across the four campuses, Wolfe said.

Legislative Day is sponsored by the University of Missouri Alliance of Alumni Associations and Extension and includes visits with legislators, campus and Extension displays, a legislative rally and a legislative panel on higher education issues.

Among the Extension advocates was Liz Fenner, who volunteers with a program in Lexington that is part of a new push in the Extension to use the arts as a community and economic development strategy.

In Lexington, Extension has a representative acting as the liaison between the community and MU on the project to help the city capitalize on its historic sites.
Volunteers in the community have worked with Extension and MU to write about the stories that go with the historic places, and then an MU professor from the School of Music works with a group of students to help record those stories in an effort to create an audio tour of the community. Students and their professor will also compose original music to go along with the audio tour.

Fenner said it's exciting to receive recognition as a small community, and to her it shows the university has "real concern and interest" in the needs of Missouri's small towns.

Fenner and a few other participants in the Lexington program are one of many groups out advocating for their programs today. Fenner said they are speaking to their local delegation, including Sen. David Pearce, R-Warrensburg, and Rep. Glen Kolkmeyer, R-Odessa.

At Legislative Day, Gov. Nixon, UM president stress education funding

Tuesday, February 18, 2014 | 5:45 p.m. CST; updated 6:14 p.m. CST, Tuesday, February 18, 2014

The Parrot AR.Drone is displayed Tuesday in the Capitol Rotunda in Jefferson City. The MU engineering school displayed a few samples of remote-controlled flight instruments as part of the 40th annual Legislative Day at the Capitol.

JEFFERSON CITY — During a Tuesday morning rally in the crowded Capitol Rotunda, University of Missouri System President Tim Wolfe emphasized...
the importance of increased funding for STEM education across the system's four campuses.

Participants in the 40th annual UM Legislative Day started the day of legislator visits with the rally, which featured Wolfe and Gov. Jay Nixon.

Echoing his State of the State address last month, the governor touted Missouri's hold on low tuition rates in the past five years and fast-growing technology rates, which he said were the fastest growing in the country. Nixon also praised UM System administrators for "answering the call" for an undergraduate tuition freeze for the 2014-15 academic year.

Ultimately, Nixon's message was simple: "Good schools help create good jobs," he said, also noting that Missouri's unemployment rate is at its lowest since 2008.

He left the specifics to Wolfe, who asked lawmakers to "reflect the value we provide" in their budgetary consideration. Wolfe laid out the system's legislative priorities, including retaining core funds, investing in STEM — or science, technology, engineering and math — and using state funds to support capital projects.

Wolfe said Missouri will need to double the number of graduates in STEM fields to meet the existing demand for graduates in the field. He said that additional funding for these fields will enable the universities to invest in faculty and facilities to support program growth. STEM booths on the third floor of the rotunda, which were set up for the event, highlighted the universities' achievements in the field.

Across the four campuses, the system faces $1.3 billion in repair and renovation projects. The universities have raised private funding dollars and will ask legislators to match their amount through a bonding initiative.

According to organizers, nearly 400 participants registered for the Legislative Day. Attendees ended the day with the Legislative Issues panel in the House lounge, which allowed them to engage with the legislators directly.
Higher ed

How to allocate funding

By Henry J. Waters III

Tuesday, February 18, 2014 at 2:00 pm

During hearings last week, Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Kurt Schaefer, R-Columbia, questioned how money for higher education should be doled out.

Gov. Jay Nixon proposes an average 5 percent increase among the state's 13 campuses based on how well each has met five performance goals set out by the legislature. **UM is slated for an increase of 5.2 percent for having met all five. Lincoln University, which met only three, will get 3.1 percent. And so on.**

*This is a step in the general direction urged by Haskell Monroe when he was University of Missouri chancellor.* He recommended a system like the one he knew when he worked in Texas, where campuses received money based on the cost of programs. Expensive science curricula would receive relatively more than cheaper liberal arts offerings. The system there, he said, had been developed over years, was credible to everyone involved and made the chore of the legislature much easier.

Of course, higher ed funding is as much about politics as mathematical accountability. The current Missouri nudge in the direction of performance-based funding is only a recent development, made more tolerable as state funding diminishes.

Those of us here in Flagship Campus country can make a lucid argument for discrimination. MU admissions standards are higher, and many of the most costly specialty programs are offered here. The Columbia campus attracts larger proportions of students.

Good for Columbia and other deserving sites like Truman State in Kirksville, but should Lincoln suffer?

One of the main categories plaguing Lincoln is graduation rate, but this criterion always has seemed questionable to me. Should not schools with student bodies of more middling qualification receive at least equal help enhancing graduation? Are schools catering to the broader spectrum of enrollees naturally prone to lower graduation rates?

With state funding making up ever-smaller proportions of college funding, the idea of performance funding becomes less compelling. Perhaps this ever-smaller contingent should be used simply as across-the-board support for base budgets. Perhaps campuses with less ability to fund budgets with tuition income should get proportionately more from the state.
Perhaps "performance-based" allocations are more political commentary than accurate reward for campus management.

UM would rather receive 5.2 percent than 5 percent, but this bonus is not much compared with the loss of funding at Lincoln. Neither amount is much to make over in either budget. It would be much easier, and perhaps fairer, for legislatures to simply allocate across the board.

A larger but less approachable issue is the configuration of higher education in the state, another topic Schaefer nosed around. Without really grasping the political nettle, he suggested the system could benefit from shared governance. He should ask former UM President Elson Floyd how that is likely to work out.

Floyd proposed merging Northwest Missouri State University at Maryville into the University of Missouri system, an idea of estimable value, but from the reaction one would think Floyd wanted to stage a lynching on campus. Schaefer would consolidate the state's nine governing boards into fewer, a suggestion that sounds sort of the same as Floyd's. Don't hold your breath. If he gets serious, run for cover.

The real problem is too many campuses. In the past, local political pressure allowed excessive proliferation. Any of us can roam a map of the state putting donkeys' tails on our choices for elimination and consolidation, but don't count on me — or Schaefer either — to lead that parade. For every reformer recommending elimination of a Maryville, I can find three convinced MU gets too damn much money.

Schaefer's discussion in the Assembly is smart and worthwhile but not likely to lead to much in the way of fundamental change in the way the state funds higher education.

HJW III

While we have the gift of life, it seems to me the only tragedy is to allow part of us to die — whether it is our spirit, our creativity or our glorious uniqueness.

— GILDA RADNER (1946-1989), COMEDIAN

MU on pace for record-setting fundraising year
By Ashley Jost

Tuesday, February 18, 2014 at 2:00 pm

**The University of Missouri is on track to have a record-setting fundraising year.**

Through the first six months of fiscal year 2014, the MU Office of Advancement has raised $88.3 million, or nearly 60 percent of its $150 million goal for the year. The six-month total surpasses the previous record of $82.3 million, which was raised during the same time period last year, the university said in a news release.

"Right now, Mizzou is all about progress," Tom Hiles, MU vice chancellor for advancement, said in a statement. "We have a wonderful new chancellor and a great team of advancement professionals in place. It's an exciting time to work with donors and alumni who care so deeply about Mizzou."

Hiles attributes the successful six months to several factors, including a proactive effort by the office of advancement and administration as a whole.

During the past few months, Hiles said, his office has been more proactive with getting deans to talk about priorities and make a case for donor support. Administrators also traveled to 14 cities to make similar pitches, which he said helped with relationship-building.

The economy is doing well, Hiles said, and that can affect donors' willingness to give.

Hiles said the success of athletics has "definitely had a positive impact on the annual fund," which includes donations as much as $10,000. Although there isn't "a lot of" data showing that athletic success leads to major gifts, Hiles said, officers and administrators were able to make contact with major donors at the Cotton Bowl and the SEC Championship.

"Having the ability to attract individuals to those venues is invaluable," he said.

Recent gifts include $6.7 million from Jon Murray to create a documentary program at the School of Journalism, $1.57 million from Chuck Wall for the School of Law, $1 million from Molly Bean Phelps for the School of Journalism, $1 million from Betty Francis for scholarships and $1 million from a confidential donor for scholarships for veterans. The university also has received $14 million in confidential gifts for several schools.

"We are grateful to our many alumni who make giving back to Mizzou a priority," Hiles said in the statement. "Major gifts really help us move the needle on our fundraising goals. Perhaps more important, they inspire other MU alumni to invest in Mizzou, too."

MU Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin said fundraising "isn't a chore" but rather something he enjoys because it involves "talking to anyone who will listen to me about the great things our students are doing."

The news about the fundraising total comes as the university is planning the One Mizzou campaign, which aims to support MU's people, programs and places with private philanthropy, according to the news release. The campaign might start within the next 12 to 18 months.
MU raises record $88.3 million in first 6 months

COLUMBIA — MU has raised a record $88.3 million in the first six months of the fiscal year, according to a news release Tuesday from the MU News Bureau.

MU has set a goal of raising $150 million for the entire year, which ends June 30, and is on track to exceed the record for fundraising for a single year. Over the same six months in the last fiscal year, MU raised a record $82.3 million, according to the release.

MU’s new One Mizzou fundraising campaign, which is still in the planning stages, will use private philanthropy to fund scholarships, support research in MU laboratories, fund new teaching technology and build MU’s endowment for the future, the release said.

The fundraising is tracked through the University of Missouri Advancement office.

Recent major gifts include:

- $1 million from Molly Bean Phelps for the Missouri School of Journalism
- $1 million from Betty Francis for scholarships
- $1 million from a confidential donor for scholarships for veterans
- $1.57 million from Charles Wall for the MU School of Law
- $14 million in confidential gifts for several schools
- $6.7 million from Jonathan Murray for the Missouri School of Journalism
Recession Complicates Analysis of Loan-Limit Increases and College Costs

By Mark Keierleber

Because of the recession’s economic effects, it’s difficult to say how increases in the borrowing limits on federal Stafford Student Loans affected college costs, the Government Accounting Office says in a new report.

While college prices have risen consistently, and continued to go up after the Stafford loan limits were raised, starting in the 2008-9 academic year, the recession’s tumultuous and complex economic environment could have contributed to the increasing college price tag, according to the report (GAO 14-7), released on Tuesday.

In 2008, because of concerns that a college education might be an unattainable goal for those unable to afford higher tuition rates, Congress passed a law that allows students to borrow more through the federal Stafford Loan program. In 2008-9, the year the law went into effect, borrowers took out 44 percent more in unsubsidized Stafford Loans than in the previous year. The loan-limit increase allowed undergraduates to borrow an additional $2,000 a year in unsubsidized Stafford Loans.

The 2008 law also required a series of GAO reports assessing how the loan-limit increases were affecting tuition and private student-loan borrowing. Tuesday’s report, the last of the series, examined whether the loan-limit increases affected tuition, fees, and room and board prices at colleges and universities. It also analyzed the trends in private student-loan borrowing since the loan limits took effect.
The recession, which affected families’ employment, income, and net worth, made it difficult for the GAO to isolate its effects from those of the loan-limit increases to determine why students were borrowing more, the report says. Also, at about the same time the loan-limit increases went into effect, federal, state, and institutional aid available to students also increased, and those changes also may have influenced the amount of money students borrowed.

Although college prices continued to rise, and overall enrollment at both public and private institutions also increased, the report emphasizes that fewer students have taken out private loans and, on average, students have borrowed lesser amounts since 2008. About 1.3 million students took out private loans in the 2011-12 academic year, it says, down from 2.8 million in 2007-8. During this same period, the average amount that students borrowed in private loans decreased to $5,870, from $7,048.

Other factors may have also contributed to the changed private-loan landscape, the report says. Since 2008, private lenders have begun requiring borrowers to have higher credit scores and cosigners, making it more difficult to obtain private loans. Also, Congress enacted new protections to raise students’ awareness about private loans and colleges took additional steps to help students find alternatives to private borrowing, including increased institutional aid.

DAVID ROSMAN: Let's find practical ways out of student-loan debt

Wednesday, February 19, 2014 | 6:00 a.m. CST
BY DAVID ROSMAN
There are three loans most of us will have to deal with during our lifetimes — home, automobile and student loans.

When seeking relief through the federal bankruptcy courts, only two of the three qualify. You must pay off a private- or government-sponsored student loan regardless of financial status.

That may change with passage of the Private Student Loan Bankruptcy Fairness Act of 2013 (H.R. 532), sponsored by U.S. Rep. Steve Cohen, D-Tenn., which would allow for the discharge of a student loan “in cases of undue hardship.”

Cohen’s bill would help relieve the stress on those who find themselves unemployed for the long term or beset by other financial difficulties that may arise from, say, medical bills, the No. 1 cause for seeking bankruptcy in the United States.

According to Sandy Baum, senior fellow at the Urban Institute, the $1 trillion debt in student loans far exceeds credit card debt. Baum emphasizes repayment plans as a recourse if one is in default with a federal student loan, but what if that is not possible?

What happens if one is unemployed for an extended period or enveloped in unpaid medical bills?

Right now, not a whole lot can be done because of the current bankruptcy laws. In fact, if one is in default on a student loan, the government can take the money from Social Security payments.

Yes, there are programs and jobs that will help with loan forgiveness, but very few. Many of the jobs, such as teaching, require additional education, working at low-income levels in rural areas or accepting a position that may be unsatisfactory from the outset. And not all teaching or government jobs qualify for loan forgiveness.

A student loan should be the last resort. In fact, I have friends who completed graduate work without taking out a loan and had money left over to put in their pockets.
My friend, Abby, received her bachelor’s and master’s degrees in physical therapy from the University of Colorado without paying a penny in tuition and had nearly $10,000 for living expenses available after graduation.

How? By acquiring private and government grants and scholarships that are accessible to the general public.

It is unfortunate that college and university financial aid offices go as far as the government-funded Pell Grants without considering alternative funding.

I am not advocating the free money guides marketed on television but suggesting only that students do some quick research at university and public libraries, talk to civic and professional organizations, and seek out those representing minority and ethnic groups.

Even businesses and nonprofit organizations, such as MoveOn.org, have scholarships of $10,000 or more to award. Most, however, are less than $1,000.

Yes, finding “free money” can often take diligent effort.

One place to start is “The College Board Scholarship Handbook (2014),” which features “more than 1.7 million awards, including scholarship, internship and loan programs offered by foundations, charitable organizations, and state and federal government agencies.” It is available at the Daniel Boone Regional Library (R378.3025 COL).

Other resources include online organizations such as SALTMoney.org. Its booklet, “60+ ways to get rid of your student loan” offers invaluable advice and direction for those in a financial bind. Also studentdebtcrisis.org, a non-profit organization dedicated to fundamental reforms to the way higher education is paid for in America.

For those who are years away from school with no way out of mounting debt, Cohen’s bill may be the best bet. The problem is that it has no co-sponsors.

A bit of activism is needed. It is time for the GOP to pay attention to those who find themselves between the proverbial rock and hard place. H.R. 532 will actually stimulate the economy by putting a portion of $1 trillion back into the pockets of those who have found themselves on the wrong side of the economic bubble.

Columbia represents MU, Stephens and Columbia colleges, one community college and a number of private for-profit institutions. It is time that U.S.
Rep. Vicki Hartzler, R-Mo., take a stand for students and alumni by adding her name as a co-sponsor of H.R. 532.

The economy is not going to lose $1 trillion in the bargain. We will acquire more money to help stimulate economic growth.

David Rosman is an editor, writer, professional speaker and college instructor in communications, ethics, business and politics. You can read more of his commentaries at ColumbiaMissourian.com, InkandVoice.com and New York Journal of Books.com.

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Smartphone app offers help for those in abusive relationships

COLUMBIA, Mo., Feb. 18 (UPI) -- University of Missouri researchers say a smartphone app can help college-age women in abusive relationships clarify priorities and create personal safety plans.

Women between the ages of 18 and 24 are at the highest risk for dating violence, figures from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show, but they are less likely than older adults to seek formal safety resources and instead look to peers or technology for help and advice, the researchers said.

University of Missouri researchers collaborated with the Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing and the One Love Foundation to develop the "One Love My Plan" smartphone application, an interactive tool to connect college-age women in abusive relationships with safety information, a university release reported Tuesday.

"At some point, almost everyone knows someone in an unhealthy relationship," Tina Bloom at the MU Sinclair School of Nursing said. "The purpose of the My Plan app is to quickly and confidentially provide women and concerned friends with information and available resources. Our goal is not to replace existing services, but to better connect students with them."
The app provides information on healthy relationship dynamics, common relationship violence myths and potential behavioral red flags; personalized safety plans based on users' priorities and backed by scientific research; and links to local and national resources.

"Students said that phones feel private, and they always have their phones with them," Bloom said. "In abusive situations, there are many factors to consider. The My Plan app gives students tools to examine their relationships, set their priorities and privately access resources when they are ready."

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Lecture focuses on role of Columbia’s black pioneers

By Ashley Jost

Tuesday, February 18, 2014 at 2:00 pm

Traci Wilson-Kleekamp said she tells the story of the University of Missouri's history with slaves because the university doesn’t.

Wilson-Kleekamp, former director of diversity and outreach in MU's School of Medicine, spoke to a few dozen people last night at the Columbia Public Library about her research into Columbia's black history. Her presentation was called "Early Pioneers of Columbia's Black Community."

She spoke of the lives and families of two men, Harrison Diggs and Horace Williams. Diggs was a former slave of MU President William Hudson, and Williams worked for the university for 60 years as a janitor.

"We don't talk about who helped build the university," Wilson-Kleekamp said about her research. "I bet at the 175th birthday party, if they showed pictures of" the university's "history, it was of the old, white men."

The majority of her presentation followed Diggs, who was one of about 10 slaves owned by Hudson. When Hudson died in 1859, Diggs and several others bought their way out of the estate, paying $1,000 total. The estate managers allowed the slaves to buy their freedom because if they ran off without paying, the estate would have sustained a financial loss.
Wilson-Kleekamp was able to continue tracking Diggs and his family through Civil War pension records and found that some of his relatives and friends were black pioneers in Columbia, helping to start a church and create a business district for blacks.

Wilson-Kleekamp said it was clear many of these blacks were educated, but she is still trying to understand how. Lincoln University was the only Mid-Missouri school that accepted blacks, but before it was established, she said, many people went to Iowa or Illinois for school and then stayed there, where they were more accepted, for work.

"Think about how much human capital was lost to the state and university because of exclusion," she said.

Wilson-Kleekamp also spoke about Williams, who worked for MU's second president, James Shannon, until he was hired by MU President Samuel Laws. Williams came to the university as a child. He was a wedding present for Hudson's wife, and he worked for MU for 60 years.

Deaton Institute hopes to collaborate with MU in international development

By Covey Eonyak Son

Former Chancellor Brady Deaton has been passionate about international development work since before his career at MU.

Deaton said retiring has allowed him to devote more time to issues he is “personally and professionally interested in.”

As executive director of the Brady and Anne Deaton Institute for University Leadership in International Development, Deaton said he hopes to increase MU’s involvement in international development efforts.
“A nation has to be able to preserve itself and be able to feed itself,” he said. “And it has to be able to do it in a way that protects the environment so it doesn’t deteriorate over time. These are global challenges we hope to work on.”

Deaton will also continue to serve as the chairman of the Board for International Food and Agricultural Development, which is a role he believes is interrelated to the objective of his institute.

“The interests (of the two positions) are very similar,” Deaton said. “Working on one strengthens my ability to work with the other, and the ideas can flow back and forth quite nicely.”

In addition, Deaton hopes to maintain his connection to MU and collaborate with academics and researchers at the university.

“I really think (MU) can help in several ways,” Deaton said. “We have a range of top quality research underway. We can collaborate with universities and research agencies around the world and enable that research to grow and do a better job of improving the world’s food supply and sustainability.”

Though the institute is only in its early stages, Deaton has been reaching out to several MU faculty members and researchers to discover what sort of projects he would like to become involved with.

“We are exploring right now; the first thing I want is to get a broad view,” Deaton said. “There are several very promising research and educational efforts underway that we see the Deaton Institute collaborating with and pushing it forward.”

One of Deaton’s conversations was with Kenneth Schneeberger, assistant dean for special programs in the College of Agriculture and international training coordinator for the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources’ international programs.

Much like Deaton, Schneeberger’s main interests are in both agricultural and economic development.

Schneeberger worked with a research team in South Africa to determine the effectiveness of genetically modified crops in eliminating hunger in developing nations. He has also spent time promoting entrepreneurship in India.
Schneeberger said he is thrilled by the prospect of working with the Deaton Institute.

“We view the opportunity to work with Brady central to expanding what we do in CAFNR,” he said. “Our focus is not just on agriculture; our focus is to make MU more prominent in international development, and that is (Deaton’s) goal as well.”

Deaton also expressed interest in working with Robert Sharp, professor of plant sciences and director of the Interdisciplinary Plant Group, which is an umbrella community of plant scientists across MU.

One of Sharp’s major research projects focuses on plant adaptation to drought.

But extending his studies to relieving food security issues in developing nations is “quite a leap,” he said.

“The best science tends not to move very fast and takes time,” Sharp said. “But there is some greater urgency for global food security. The other obvious problem is that we need dramatically more funding for plant science research.”

Sharp said through collaborating with the Deaton Institute, he can better overcome the challenges.

“Deaton has tremendous connections from working with United States Agency for International Development and other agencies,” Sharp said. “I think bringing experts together to identify the key urgencies will help move things more rapidly, and I hope for more opportunities to network and gain funding.”

Deaton said he also hopes to expand collaboration beyond MU’s campus to other universities in the UM System.

“I have met with international leaders and chancellors of the other three universities in the UM System,” Deaton said. “I linked them to some of the discussions that are taking place here at MU, promoting a clear understanding across the campuses of what we are doing.”

Deaton said he hopes to improve political and economic stability across the globe.
“When we see shortages of food that lead to increasing prices at the wrong time, you can have really great political instability,” he said. “That destroys the ability for a nation to preserve itself and the environment. These are issues we hope to work on.”

Forum focuses on ways to reduce crime at Aspen Heights

By Alan Burdziak

Tuesday, February 18, 2014 at 4:57 pm Comments (10)

Educating residents about safety and security to help prevent crime at Aspen Heights and other Columbia student housing complexes was the central theme at a Tuesday forum attended by police, Aspen Heights management and other members of the community.

Complications have marred Aspen Heights, in southeast Columbia, since before it opened. Once students were able to move in a few weeks late, crime became a well-publicized issue. Last month, utility bills drew parents’ ire as they inexplicably shot up. However, the forum Tuesday afternoon focused on crime and how Aspen Heights can work with the Columbia and University of Missouri police departments, the university, the city and other local properties on reducing criminal activity.

Nearly everyone said students who stay at Aspen Heights, and other complexes, don’t take enough precautions to protect themselves from crime. Management at Aspen Heights sends out text message and email blasts to notify tenants of crime in the area and have gone door-to-door to educate them about security and promote awareness, telling tenants to lock their doors and windows, to not leave valuables in plain sight or in their cars and to be careful what guests they bring in, among other things.

“It’s education about household safety, education about personal safety,” Aspen Heights President Greg Vestri said. “We have a lot of students living” as the “head of the household for the very first time in their lives learning life lessons.”
Austin, Texas-based Aspen Heights operates student housing properties across the country, including Texas, Washington state and Tennessee. Vestri and corporate spokesman Stuart Watkins represented the main office at the forum.

In November, two Columbia police officers moved to Aspen Heights in exchange for free rent. Both were at Tuesday’s forum and said education and awareness are the top priorities. The relationships they build with the tenants are valuable as well, said Tyler Yates, general manager at the company’s Columbia property, to decrease the apprehension many young people feel in talking to police.

“It is so important to build the relationships so they do understand you and what you’re trying to do,” Yates said.

Melvin Buckner, Columbia police’s neighborhood watch coordinator, suggested starting a watch group at the complex. The discussion also touched on drugs and alcohol, and Vestri noted the complex offers a bus service to and from downtown Columbia to keep tenants from driving drunk. He also mentioned a policy the company implemented at its San Antonio location when drugs and crime became an issue. There, he said, if someone is found with drugs or drug paraphernalia, they are evicted without exception.

“We know that specifically has made a big difference,” Vestri said.

Aspen Heights, police meet to discuss safety, crime prevention
Tuesday, February 18, 2014 | 9:22 p.m. CST; updated 6:41 a.m. CST, Wednesday, February 19, 2014
BY JOE GUSZKOWSKI

COLUMBIA — Simple precautions such as locking doors, closing blinds and activating alarm systems are steps residents of student housing complexes can take to prevent crime.

That was the bottom line at a meeting of law enforcement, city and MU officials, as well as representatives of Aspen Heights, where the meeting took place Tuesday afternoon, and The Grove.
The purpose of the meeting, which was not open to residents, was to discuss what could be done to reduce crime in student apartment complexes. Other complexes were invited to attend, but only The Grove sent representatives.

Crime has been a concern at Aspen Heights since it opened in August. Police have responded to 248 calls there since Aug. 1, according to Columbia Police Department dispatch data. In most of the burglaries reported, the point of entry was an unlocked door, Aspen Heights President Greg Vestri said.

Those in attendance agreed that educating tenants on how to keep themselves and their property safe was a top priority.

"I think there is that false sense of security," said Columbia Police Officer Caleb Bowen, whose patrol area includes Aspen Heights.

Columbia Police Sgt. Joe Bernhard said a "party atmosphere" might have resulted in much of the crime reported after Aspen Heights opened.

"The last few months, it’s calmed down quite a bit," Bernhard said.

CAMPUS CORNER

MU’s Haith has discussed how to handle unruly fans with team

February 18

BY TOD PALMER
The Kansas City Star

Before Oklahoma State sophomore Marcus Smart shoved a fan in the stands at Texas Tech, Missouri coach Frank Haith had already talked to his players about the need to block out vulgarity and vitriol spewed by the occasional fan.
Smart served a three-game suspension after shoving super fan Jeff Orr during a Feb. 8 game in Lubbock, Texas. The Cowboys went 0-3 without their leading scorer.

The Tigers, 18-7 and 6-6 in the SEC, playing at Mississippi that day, prompting a preemptive warning from Haith.

“To be honest with you, we had a conversation right before that even happened,” Haith said. “We were going to Ole Miss and you say, ‘Guys, listen, you’ve got to put your blinders on and focus on listening to what is in our huddle and what’s going on here on the court.’”

Haith doesn’t think such behavior from a minority of fans is anything new, but he said it has become more prevalent — particularly at the college level.

“I don’t think it’s changed,” Haith said. “I think it’s always been what it is. I think that social media has changed. We hear a lot of stuff. It’s a tough deal.”

Much tougher in basketball perhaps than any other sport.

Fans aren’t as close to the action in football and crowds for many other sports are as large and rowdy at the college level.

“We’re different than any other sport, because of the proximity of the fans and the players,” Haith said. “You can hear everything. ... It’s very, very difficult, but I think you must (block it out). You have to focus on what you can control and that’s how you play and how we coach.”

Certainly, a player or coach can’t let frustration boil over into the stands.

“I was surprised,” Missouri junior Jordan Clarkson said of Smart’s altercation. “I haven’t seen anybody act like that before in a college basketball game. Maybe his emotions just got out of hand. From what I hear, he’s a great kid. He just made a mistake and he’s got to live with the consequences.”

Of course, there is another option — skip frustration altogether and use the overzealousness as fuel.

“It’s kind of fun to hear fans talk a lot, especially on the road,” said Tigers junior Jabari Brown, who averages 20.1 points per game on the road. “Because when you’re able to hit shots and stuff like that, they can’t really say anything and have to be quiet. That’s one of the reasons I like playing on the road. It’s kind of an us-against-the-world kind of thing.”

Read more here: http://www.kansascity.com/2014/02/18/4832542/mus-haith-has-discussed-how-to.html#storylink=cpy