House cuts Missouri College Advising Corps appropriation

Program had plan to double.

By Rudi Keller

Wednesday, March 26, 2014 at 2:00 pm

JEFFERSON CITY — A $500,000 appropriation to boost the College Advising Corps program at the University of Missouri didn't survive the House budget debate as House Majority Leader John Diehl gathered money to fund utility aid.

Diehl passed amendments on other budget bills as well to shift a total of $6.1 million to the Utilicare program, including $79,900 from Secretary of State Jason Kander's office. The advising corps lost its appropriation on a 119-30 vote.

The advising program is engaged in an aggressive effort to extend its reach. It sends recent college graduates into communities with traditionally low college entry rates to work with counselors, advising high school students about their options after graduation. It has advisers in 26 schools and wants to double that number in two years.

State Rep. John Wright, one of the program's biggest legislative boosters, defended it during the debate.

"We do a lot of things in this body with a very low payback for special groups," he said. "This is a program that has demonstrated extraordinary success with a very small budget."

In the 26 schools with the advisers, college entrance rates increased 11 percent, Wright said.

Diehl, R-Town and Country, deleted the appropriation with the support of some Democrats and to the dismay of some Republicans.

Rep. Genise Montecillo, D-St. Louis, called the $500,000 earmark a nominal appropriation that the university could find in its annual appropriation of more than $400 million.

"The MU system receives quite a bit of core funding in our budget process," she said.
Since the program began in 2008, it has received $1 million from the university and funds most of its $1.3 million budget on grants.

Rep. Jeff Grisamore, R-Lee's Summit, sided with Wright in the debate.

"It is very, very impressive and compelling as to the amount of return on investment for a small sum of money," he said.

Diehl, however, prevailed, the expected outcome for an amendment offered by the majority leader.

"This is a choice of whether to create another program to solve another problem," Diehl said. "This money is more appropriately spent on utility. It is a better use of our money. It is about making a better choice."

Missouri College Advising Corps Executive Director Beth Tankersley-Bankhead said she is still hopeful. "We're going to continue sharing our program and its positive outcomes with legislators," she said.

Tankersley-Bankhead has spent about one day each week of the session at the Capitol, she said, explaining what the program does to legislators directly or to committees.

"We're doing great things and really changing the lives of students across the state," she said.

**Missouri House splits along party lines to reject Medicaid expansion, embrace operation of riverways**

By Rudi Keller

Wednesday, March 26, 2014 at 2:00 pm Comments (1)

JEFFERSON CITY — The Missouri House debated Medicaid expansion and the future of the Ozark National Scenic Riverways in a lengthy afternoon session Tuesday that ended with first-round passage of a $26.6 billion state operating budget for the coming year.
On nearly identical party-line votes, the House rejected amendments to the spending bills for health, mental health and social services that would have saved $75 million in state general revenue and spent $1.73 billion in federal tax aid to expand Medicaid. Democrats supported the proposal to use money available under the Affordable Care Act, with Republicans opposed to any action that might signal endorsement of the law they call Obamacare.

"This isn't money that is falling from the sky, descending on our state," said Rep. Keith Frederick, R-Rolla. "They are creating further debt for our nation to send us this money."

Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Care Act aims to provide health care coverage to people earning less than 138 percent of the federal poverty limit, or $32,900 for a family of four. An estimated 300,000 Missourians would obtain coverage under the law.

"On this issue, more than any one since I have been here, I am having trouble understanding their thinking," said Rep. Ed Schieffer, D-Troy. "I am having trouble understanding how anyone paying federal income taxes could be happy about sending their tax money to other states."

The budget approved yesterday spends $26.6 billion in the year beginning July 1, about $1 billion less than the budget proposed by Gov. Jay Nixon.

The governor's spending plan included Medicaid expansion and predicted that the state will receive $200 million more general revenue next year than the budget presented to the House.

The House budget includes the extra revenue anticipated by Nixon but assigns it to a surplus revenue fund that would only have money if Nixon's prediction is correct. Nixon proposed a $278 million increase for the foundation formula, the program for basic aid to public schools. The House plan also spends $278 million more on schools but takes $156 million of that increase from the surplus fund.

The budget plan cuts sharply into Nixon's proposed increases for higher education. Nixon proposed increasing base budgets by 4 to 5 percent and providing extra money for science, technology, engineering and math education as well as training mental health professionals.

The House plan provides an average 2 percent increase, with an uncertain additional 1 percent from the surplus fund.

**If all the money is spent as projected by the House budget, the University of Missouri System would receive $420.6 million in the coming year, an increase of $13.1 million.**

Many of the amendments, including the Medicaid expansion proposals, were ideological fights. The debate over the Ozark National Scenic Riverways, a federal park along the Current and Jacks Fork rivers in southern Missouri, was another.

Republicans upset with proposed management plans for the park want the federal government to turn the 88,000-acre property over to the state parks system. One proposal, preferred by the
National Park Service, would close unauthorized horse trails and restrict the size of boat motors on some parts of the rivers and ban motorized boats on others.

"What is now being proposed is increased restrictions," said Rep. Robert Ross, R-Yukon. "That is what we are fighting here."

The budget includes $6 million to operate the park if it is ceded to the state. Rep. Jill Schupp, D-Creve Couer, sought to remove the funding.

"Unlimited horseback riding damages soil and vegetation and pollutes the river with excrement," Schupp said, citing water tests that showed in 2009 that fecal E. coli bacteria readings were five times higher than 2002.

Rep. Jeff Roorda, D-Barnhart, said the issue being raised was bigger than the proposed management plan.

"The nasty plan afoot here is to again say we don't have to abide by any federal authority and we reside in a separate country, a sovereign country," he said. "It is the notion you can't limit my rights no matter what damage it does to anyone else's."

MU athletic department runs in the black

By David Morrison

Wednesday, March 26, 2014 at 2:00 pm

The Missouri athletic department operated at a surplus of $4 million during the 2012-13 fiscal year, according to the annual revenue and expense report the university submits to the NCAA.

The document, obtained through an open-records request, reports that the athletic department generated $76.3 million of revenue from July 1, 2012, through June 30, 2013, while spending $72.3 million.

Missouri operated at a deficit of $17.7 million for the 2011-12 fiscal year, spending $68.4 million and taking in $50.7 million in revenue. That deficit was caused by the Big 12 withholding Missouri's conference payout for the year as it was exiting the league for the Southeastern Conference, executive associate athletic director for operations Tim Hickman said.
MU made $1.8 million from conference, NCAA and tournament distributions in 2011-12, a number that ballooned to $21.1 million in 2012-13 thanks in large part to a $19.6 million infusion from the SEC.

Hickman said Missouri budgeted $14.1 million from the Big 12 that never materialized in 2011-12. He said the athletic department dug into its reserves to pay off some of the deficit, as well as using university funds.

"As we mature into the SEC and some of the new revenue streams we're anticipating there, we'll start a payment plan back to the institution for those funds," Hickman said.

MU expects a surplus of $2.8 million for the current fiscal year that ends June 30, according to a line-item budget obtained through an open-records request. The athletic department expects to take in $75.3 million and spend $72.5 million this year.

Hickman said the school is optimistic that revenue projection is on the low end. The school budgeted $20.4 million in conference/NCAA funds and $18.1 million in ticket sales, after reporting $22.5 million in ticket revenue for 2012-13.

"A strong year in football obviously helps a lot," Hickman said. "We go into our budgets trying to be conservative, as well. I anticipate, when it's all said and done, we'll beat that."

Hickman said the school is not currently budgeting any added revenue from the SEC Network — which launches Aug. 14 — for the 2014-15 fiscal year, as it's not clear how much the league's schools can expect from the new network and how soon they can expect it.

"Hopefully, we'll realize some of that" revenue, "but we're not going into" 2014-15 "counting on that," Hickman said.

Missouri attributed $31.9 million of revenue and $17.4 million in expenses to its football team in 2012-13, a difference of $14.5 million. The Tigers counted $12.6 million of revenue and $6.4 million in expenses from its men's basketball team, an excess of $6.2 million.

Missouri reported just less than $15 million in football ticket sales for 2012-13, an increase of 22 percent from the $12.3 million it reported the previous year. Men's basketball experienced a 6.2 percent increase in ticket revenue over the same period, from $4.9 million to $5.2 million.

Football and men's basketball combined to make up 89 percent of the ticket-sale revenue the Missouri athletic department reported in 2012-13.
RULING COULD CLEAR PATH FOR COLLEGE ATHLETES
UNION

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

COLUMBIA, Mo. • College athletics could change forever if Wednesday’s ruling by the National Labor Relations Board transcends Northwestern University.

The NLRB ruled that football players at Northwestern can create a union, which would be the first of its kind for college athletes. The ruling, announced by NLRB regional director Peter Sung Ohr, means the federal agency recognizes the college players as employees of their university.

“Based on the entire record in this case, I find that the Employer’s football players who receive scholarships fall squarely within (federal labor law’s) broad definition of ‘employee,’” Ohr said in his 24-page decision.

Northwestern disagrees. After the ruling, the Big Ten Conference school in Evanston, Ill., announced it will appeal to labor authorities in Washington.

Southeastern Conference commissioner Mike Slive has been a leading voice in challenging the’s NCAA long-standing regulations against compensating college athletes, Slive struck a similar tone to Northwestern’s response the NLRB ruling.

“Notwithstanding today’s decision, the SEC does not believe that full-time students participating in intercollegiate athletics are employees of the universities they attend,” Slive said. “We will continue to actively pursue increased support for student-athletes by seeking to modify the NCAA governance process to permit changes that are fair to student-athletes and also consistent with what we believe are the appropriate principles of amateurism.”

Private schools such as Northwestern are leading the charge to form unions for athletes because the NLRB does not hold jurisdiction over public universities, such as the University of Missouri.

“It’s certainly an important situation to follow, and we’ll continue to monitor things as they develop,” Mizzou athletics department spokesman Chad Moller said. “Today’s ruling applies to private universities only, but it could eventually have an impact on public schools down the road.”

Formed in January by former Northwestern quarterback Kain Colter and former college athletes at UCLA and Massachusetts, the College Athletes Players Association has several goals in mind, including an
expansion of medical coverage for current and former players, increased awareness and better treatment for head injuries and improved graduation rates.

As he read the news Wednesday, former University of Missouri wide receiver T.J. Moe had mixed reactions. Moe worried there could be unintended consequences to reshaping the dynamics between athletes and the schools they attend.

“In any real job, as anyone knows, you can be terminated at any time,” said Moe, a 2012 Mizzou grad who majored in business administration. “In college, you can get terminated for doing something really dumb, but you get multiple chances. ... In the professional world, you’re not treated that way.”

Moe, an NFL free agent who spent last season on the New England Patriots’ injured reserve squad, said he was generally opposed to the idea of unions and would be concerned about backlashes that would harm players financially.

“If you can’t strike up a collective bargaining agreement, what happens? You go on strike,” Moe said. “You can’t tell certain kids they’re not going to play football anymore. Most of those kids can’t afford to go to school then. Maybe kids at Stanford can afford to go on strike, but then you’ve just screwed a bunch of kids at Tennessee who can’t afford to pay for school.”

Former Mizzou basketball player Kim English, who now plays professionally in France, sees some value in unions for college athletes.

“It’s a weird gray area,” said English, who played at MU from 2008-2012 and played one year with the NBA’s Detroit Pistons. “I felt as though I was an employee, but also as student, I was representing the university just as any coach or professor would be.”

Though NBA players are represented by a player’s union and work under a collective bargaining agreement, English believed MU protected his interests in college.

“I feel like when you make a commitment to a university the people there honestly have your best interest at heart,” he said. “I was trusting in Mizzou that they were doing right by my teammates, and with that I had to represent those six letters the right way.”

Will NLRB ruling prompt college athletes to unionize?
The National Labor Relations Board's ruling Wednesday that members of Northwestern University's football team are employees and so are eligible to unionize could have a bigger impact.

The ruling by NLRB Regional Director Peter Sung Ohr said all grant-in-aid scholarship players for the Northwestern football team who are still eligible to play are "employees" of the university and directed "an immediate election in this case," according to the Chicago Business Journal. Former Northwestern quarterback Kain Colter led a group of players campaigning to unionize.

In a statement, the university in Evanston, Ill., said it was disappointed in the ruling and would appeal. It has until April 9 to file an appeal.

While the ruling affects only private universities (state colleges and universities operate under their respective state labor laws), the impact of the ruling could reshape the way football and basketball programs are run.

Chad Moller, spokesman for the University of Missouri-Columbia's athletics program, told the St. Louis Post-Dispatch that while the ruling applies only to private schools, "it could eventually have an impact on public schools down the road."

"If you can't strike up a collective bargaining agreement, what happens? You go on strike," former Mizzou wide receiver T.J. Moe told the Post-Dispatch."...Maybe kids at Stanford can afford to go on strike, but then you've just screwed a bunch of kids at Tennessee who can't afford to pay for school."

WHAT OTHERS SAY: MU still dragging its feet on sex-assault policy

More than two months after UM System President Tim Wolfe gave an impassioned response to the rape allegations that rocked the flagship campus, the university still lacks an employee policy for reporting suspected sexual violence.

Along with not having a reporting requirement, the UM System offers no training to faculty or staff on how to handle possible violations of Title IX, the federal education anti-discrimination law that covers (in addition to women’s sports) sexual harassment
or violence. The story was reported last week in the Columbia Missourian by Caroline Bauman.

The U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights recommended in April 2011 that universities adopt a reporting requirement. Even for a university bureaucracy, three years ought to be enough time to comply.

An ESPN investigation into the alleged sexual assault of former MU swimmer Sasha Menu Courey drew attention to the system’s lack of a formal policy for reporting Title IX violations.

ESPN’s investigation said that Ms. Menu Courey killed herself 16 months after she told campus personnel — including a rape crisis counselor, a campus therapist, a campus nurse and two doctors — that she had been raped off campus by as many as three football players.

The sports network said MU disputed that Ms. Menu Courey also told an athletics department administrator, though she had written in her journal that she had done so.

MU said at the time that it did not pursue criminal charges upon learning of Ms. Menu Courey’s rape allegations in late 2012.

“There needs to be clear guidelines for what we as faculty do when this happens,” Joan Hermsen, chair of the Department of Women’s and Gender Studies at MU, told the Missourian last week.

Noel English, the campus Title IX coordinator, said the Columbia campus is finalizing a policy that mandates certain faculty and staff, known as “required reporters,” to inform the university of student complaints alleging sexual violence, harassment or other discrimination prohibited by the federal law.

Ms. English said university leaders are “doing our best to come up with a policy that fulfills the institution’s obligations under Title IX while not deterring individuals from seeking assistance from those they trust.”

She added that the university was “concerned about the possibility that students will feel less inclined to seek help because of the reporting requirement.”
Many universities have navigated that narrow line to come up with reporting policies that reassure students about both their safety and their privacy. It is shameful that the state university system’s crown jewel is still wringing its hands about the matter, three years after being told by the federal government to do something and four years after a young woman alleged she was attacked and then committed suicide.

Mr. Wolfe came to the university system from the business world where presumably this sort of foot-dragging would not occur. He needs to put his business background into play and stop the bureaucratic buck-passing. Missouri students and their families need to be reassured that the culture of the universities does not allow discrimination to be hung up while policy is nitpicked.

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advanced degrees later on — so no doctors, lawyers, or MBAs — the advantage is naturally going to lie with the tech schools.

So as a policy nerd, to me the most interesting part of Payscale's rankings isn't the top of the list: It's the bottom. The site finds almost two-dozen schools where the average graduate — not dropouts, mind you, but students who finish their degree — will probably lose money on their educations, because their earning power won't increase enough to justify the cost of tuition. To be blunt, these schools make students poorer. And we're talking about traditional colleges, not nefarious for-profits: Maryland College Institute of Art, Morehead State University, Adams State College (out-of-state), Fayetteville State University (in-state), University of Montevallo, University of North Carolina at Asheville (out-of-state), Bluefield College, Savannah State University (out-of-state), Fayetteville State University (out-of-state), and Shaw University.

And these are just the worst performers. There are many more schools where the average return on a degree is low enough that students would be better off putting their money in stocks or bonds.

To be clear, Payscale is not performing the most precise analysis imaginable. We're talking about broad averages based on user submitted data (the site does let you break down ROI by major, for what it's worth). And crucially, Payscale doesn't compare the alums of low-ranked colleges to demographically similar high school grads. It compares them to the earning power of the median high school graduate — and some of the students graduating from Shaw University or the University of Montevallo might have weaker skills than the typical kid who goes into the world with just a high school diploma.

But it does reinforce why we so desperately need high-quality consumer information about higher education. In the past, the higher-ed lobby has stood in the way of allowing the Department of Education to track college graduates over the long term to keep tabs on their lifetime earnings — what's known as a "unit-record system." And as a result, we have to rely on less complete government surveys, or less-than-ideal crowdsourced databases like Payscale's. As a result, some students are going into college financially blind, and they could be ending up poorer for it — literally.

Weissmann is Slate's senior business and economics correspondent.
MU professor awarded Einstein Professorship

March 26, 2014  BY Sarah Redohl

James Birchler, Curator’s Professor of Biological Science at the University of Missouri, has received an Einstein Professorship from the Chinese Academy of Science.

The award is bestowed upon only 20 international scientists each year and is the highest scientific award from the Chinese Academy of Science. Recipients must be “actively working at the frontiers of science and technology for the purpose of lecturing and interacting with faculty and students in China,” according to an MU press release.

Birchler, who is also one of nine MU professors belonging to the National Academy of Science, has been recognized for his studies in maize and Drosophila genetics. According to the press release, his lab was also the first to develop artificial chromosomes in plants and a method for visualizing chromosomes in plants.

The Chinese Academy of Science honored Birchler during ceremonies March 18 through 21 in China, where he gave a series of lectures in Beijing and Chengdu. Birchler will also receive and host a Chinese scholar for several months at MU.

MU WRESTLING STAFFER ARRESTED FOR PUBLIC INTOXICATION

By Dave Matter dmatter@post-dispatch.com 314-340-8508
COLUMBIA, Mo. • An academic coordinator with the Missouri wrestling team was arrested early Sunday morning for public intoxication in Oklahoma City, where the team was staying for the NCAA championships.

Brandon Orr, listed as an academic coordinator with MU’s wrestling, volleyball and swimming and diving teams, was one of 50 people in the lobby at the Sheraton Hotel in Oklahoma City when police arrived at 2:44 a.m. for a public disturbance call, according to the Oklahoma City Police incident report.

Officers found a crowd of people, many of them college athletes, wrestling and drinking alcohol in the lobby. An officer told the crowd to leave the hotel or return to their rooms, during which a person identified as Orr shouted, “Because I have a criminal justice degree!”

Orr was sitting at a table filled with empty beer bottles. His eyes were red, watery and bloodshot, and his breath had the strong odor of alcohol, the report said. Orr twice refused an officer’s request that he stand up from the table. The officer grabbed Orr by the wrist, lifted him out of his seat and placed him under arrest for public intoxication. Orr was wearing a gold Mizzou shirt and identified himself as a Mizzou wrestling assistant coach and psychologist. Orr apologized to the officers several times. He was booked into the county jail without incident and was fined $167 with an April 23 court date.

"I apologize for my recent actions,” Orr, 35, said in a statement released by MU athletics department spokesman Chad Moller. “I made an inappropriate comment to an officer and I very much regret that. I know that this doesn't reflect the values we are held to at Mizzou.”

"We are aware of Brandon's situation and are addressing it in an appropriate manner,” Moller said in a prepared statement. “We are disappointed that this happened, and it's an important reminder that staff members are held to high standards and that we are always representing the University at all times.”

Earlier Saturday night in Oklahoma City, Mizzou's J'Den Cox became the first MU freshman to win a national championship, capturing the 197-pound title. Junior Drake Houdashelt finished fifth in the 149-pound class.

Wrestling team’s sport psychologist arrested after hotel lobby party
By Katherine Knott

Oklahoma City Police arrested a Missouri wrestling staff member early Sunday morning for public intoxication in the lobby of the Sheraton Hotel in downtown Oklahoma City.

“We are aware of Brandon’s situation and are addressing it in an appropriate manner,” Mizzou Athletics spokesman Chad Moller said in an emailed statement. “We are disappointed that this happened, and it’s an important reminder that staff members are held to high standards and that we are always representing the University at all times.”

Moller said Missouri athletics employees are always on the job whether or not they are working.

Brandon Orr is the wrestling team’s sports psychologist. He was arrested wearing a yellow Missouri polo and in the presence of several student athletes, according to the police report.

Orr was in Oklahoma City with the Missouri wrestling team for the 2014 NCAA Wrestling National Championships. The Tigers had eight wrestlers in the tournament.

The Sheraton is one block from Chesapeake Energy Arena, the site of the championships. It was a team hotel for many of the competing schools.

When officers arrived at the hotel, about 50 people were in the lobby, many of them drunk and intoxicated student athletes, according to the police report, though no other university affiliations were mentioned. The report said that hotel employees called the police because the situation was getting out of hand.

Officers asked people in the lobby to return to their rooms, but Orr refused. He also refused twice to the officers’ request to stand up.

The report said Orr smelled of alcohol and that there was a table with several empty beer bottles in front of him.

The tournament ended Saturday night, and Orr was arrested around 3 a.m. Sunday. He was released 10 hours later and paid a $167 fine, as is the policy with local public drunkenness citations.

“I apologize for my recent actions,” Orr said in a statement from the athletic department. “I made an inappropriate comment to an officer, and I very much regret that. I know that this doesn’t reflect the values we are held to at Mizzou.”

Orr, an assistant teaching professor, has been with MU since 2008. He is currently a fellow with the Honors College and has taught some general honors courses. He currently instructs an online course for graduate students about sports and applied coaching.

“We cannot comment on disciplinary procedures,” MU spokesman Christian Basi said Wednesday.
According to the human resources policy manual, UM employees can be fired without warning due to the seriousness of the incident. Basi said being drunk on the job is a serious enough offense to warrant summary discharge.

This is the seventh known arrest this year of a Missouri athlete or athletics department official.

A Conversation With: Mark Morgan

BY MILES DOBIS

MARCH 27, 2014 | 12:00 A.M. CST

MU associate professor Mark Morgan holds his carp catch of the day. He is trying to introduce the fish into Columbia’s restaurants.

Photo courtesy of Mark Morgan

Asian carp are the Midwest’s most infamous invasive species. Big, ugly and ubiquitous in local waterways, the fish are known to leap out of the water and seriously injure boaters if they’re frightened. Efforts are underway to stop the species from spreading, with methods including electrical blockades preventing fish from reaching the Great Lakes, but an MU associate professor offers a creative way to limit the fish’s damage: eat it.

Mark Morgan is a specialist in social aspects with natural resources in MU’s College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources. He proposes the introduction of Asian carp to Columbia’s food scene. Vox talked to him about his involvement with the project and how the average Columbian can limit the carp invasion by simply eating them at restaurants.
What kinds of fish do you mean when you say Asian carp?
When we say Asian carp we mean two kinds of carp: silver carp and bighead carp. The silver carp are the ones that jump out of the water.

How did Asian carp become such a problem in the Midwest?
We imported these fish back in the 1970s in the United States back to Arkansas with specific purposes in mind, like water cleanup and water purification for sewage lagoons and golf course ponds. The fish eat the small things you can’t see, like phytoplankton and zooplankton, which are microscopic animals. They were under cultivation, so we had them penned up. But then we had floods, and they got out and quickly got into bigger river systems. They’re the most problematic in the Mississippi, the Missouri, the Ohio and the Illinois river systems. The biggest threat is them getting into the Great Lakes and how they might damage a multi-billion dollar fishing industry.

You’re working on integrating Asian carp into more diets. How are you doing this?
We’re working with a couple of Mexican restaurants and a couple of Chinese restaurants. We’re trying to get this food product into their restaurant in a couple of different applications. What we’re looking at is a fish taco, a fish dumpling and even a fish chorizo. I’ve eaten all of these products before, and they’re all great. You could never tell it’s fish.

Have you tested various kinds of preparations?
We use silver carp, and we have documented evidence that silver carp tastes significantly better than catfish, so this is great news for us. Catfish is the Missouri state fish, and there is a great deal of catfish being eaten here on a regular basis. We also did an informal taste test over at SNR (School of Natural Resources) in the fall, and we just told people what it was, fried it up, and it went over very well. The scores went up significantly.

What are the health benefits to eating Asian carp?
They’re low on mercury because they’re midstream feeders; they’re not bottom feeders. But when many Americans think of carp, they think in terms of grass carp or common carp, which are bottom feeders, and so they’re subject to the fleshy, musty flavor. Because it’s a midstream feeder, it’s not subject to toxins and contaminants sitting on the bottom. It’s very low in PCBs and mercury, and it’s high in the good things. It has more omega-3 fatty acids than salmon. It’s a clean white meat that tastes good; it looks good, but we just can’t quite convince people.

Why do you think the public is resisting eating it?
It’s largely a perception problem about the carp. Carp are pretty ugly; they’re not going to win any beauty contests. They’ve got a displaced eye; they’ve got big scales and look like a big goldfish. It just doesn’t look so appealing or appetizing. Americans would call it “rough fish” or trash fish. The second issue is that the carp are very bony, so it’s difficult to filet and practically impossible to cut all the bones away and make it completely boneless.

What other sorts of research do you do related to fishing in Missouri?
I do a lot of fish studies. We have some interesting fishing techniques in Missouri that sometimes can be found in other states, but not all of the time, so I’ve done studies on paddlefish snagging. There’s a six week window in the spring where you can legally fish for paddlefish, so people are out there with rods and reels. We’ve also done studies on fish sucker giggers in the Ozarks. You go out at night in the wintertime; you’ve got lights on the boat with a long stick and a prong, and you poke the fish. Then you have a fish fry at the end. It’s such a great experience.
ASK A SCIENTIST Q: WHY ARE PLANTS GREEN?

By DEANNA LANKFORD of MU's Office of Science Outreach

Wednesday, March 26, 2014 at 2:00 pm

This question was provided by students in Bethany Morris' first-grade class:

A: "Plants are green instead of pink, blue or black because the cells in the leaves and stems of plants contain chlorophyll, which is a very important pigment. Chlorophyll allows plants to absorb light and use it as an energy source to make food," explains Bethany Stone, a plant biologist at the University of Missouri. "Plants are the ultimate producers and produce food for other life on Earth," Stone explains. Plants do this by absorbing light energy from the sun and use that energy to make sugars from carbon dioxide in the air and water in the soil. "Sugars made by plants are used to make stems and roots longer and create new leaves and even flowers," she notes.

All life on Earth relies on plants as a food source. For instance, herbivores — such as cattle, mice, rabbits and deer — eat only plant materials, such as grasses, seeds, bushes and leaves. Carnivores rely on small animals such as rabbits and mice for a food source, but without plants there would be no rabbit or mice populations.

"Flowers aren't usually green because they are the reproductive parts of the plant, where seeds are produced," Stone explains. If you watch carefully on a summer day, you will find that many insects visit flowers. These insects receive a sugary meal from the flower and carry pollen to other flowers. Soon, the flowers develop seeds that will lead to new plants. The beautiful colors of spring and summer attract insects, which carry pollen from flower to flower.