MU to hire full-time Title IX coordinator, investigator
Loftin announces plans to better address sexual assault allegations on campus.

By ASHLEY JOST
Tuesday, June 10, 2014 at 7:54 am

In an effort to better address sexual assault allegations on campus, University of Missouri Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin is hiring full-time help.

Loftin announced Tuesday morning in an inter-campus email that the university will be hiring a full-time Title IX coordinator and adding a full-time investigator.

Linda Bennett, associate education professor, was named interim Title IX coordinator last week. A search is in progress for the investigator. Loftin said he hopes to have the hiring, organization and training either in place or finished by the start of the fall semester. The investigator likely will be hired before the coordinator.

Noel English, director of the MU Equity Office, previously served as the Title IX coordinator, but that was a small portion of her job compared to running the rest of the office, Loftin said last week.

“When this all began to unfold, we knew we needed a full-time person,” he said, referencing the past several months of investigations and looking into the way UM System schools handle sexual assault allegations.

Bennett recently got back from a one-year fellowship and has been working as a special assistant to the provost through the end of the semester. Loftin said she “was a person who was available” to fulfill this role and help Loftin and other administrators define what they hope the coordinator will do. Bennett will serve in this role until the end of the summer, he said.

Loftin’s current plan is for the full-time Title IX coordinator to handle reports of sexual assault as well as training for mandated reporters. Training is particularly important to Loftin, he said, after an
executive order from UM System President Tim Wolfe made every university employee a mandated reporter, with the exception of legal and medical professionals.

The full-time investigator will work with the coordinator and further look into allegations, with the hope they will provide more information to the Student Conduct Board when it is dealing with sexual assault cases.

There is no one who is able to investigate these cases now, Loftin said, adding that it would be unrealistic to expect English to be able to run the Equity Office, handle Title IX reports and investigate every case.

“These executive functions are not feasible with the structure we had in place before,” he said. “Noel did the best she could. We just didn’t have the horsepower there.”

English will serve as the deputy Title IX coordinator, handling cases that are specifically related to discrimination issues. Cathy Scroggs, vice chancellor for student affairs and former deputy Title IX coordinator, will be a “back up” to Bennett, Loftin said.

“I don’t think we can afford to wait any longer than we have to to find an investigator,” Loftin said. “It’s not a huge number of cases, but enough of them are out there, and unless we have a good investigative capability, it’s hard for our conduct process to work well.”

Bennett will report directly to Loftin for the time being. Loftin said he is hoping the UM System task force charged with reviewing sexual assault and mental health service policies will offer some guidance on how to structure the chain of command going forward. He said he would prefer no more than one person between him and the coordinator.

When Wolfe charged the UM System task force with looking into the existing campus resources, he said he was prepared to offer additional help, including money, to move along programs or help with new positions. Loftin said he plans to ask for funding for these new positions.
Loftin, in an email to MU students, staff and faculty, named Linda Bennett as interim Title IX coordinator.

Bennett and her successors will be charged with overseeing the university's compliance efforts, reviewing current policies and developing faculty, staff and student training related to Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Title IX prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in any federally funded education program or activity.

MU spokesman Christian Basi said that some of the factors in Bennett's selection were her experience with faculty training programs and her 25 years as a university employee. Basi said he had no details about the selection process for a permanent coordinator at this time.

Bennett, who is currently an assistant to the provost and an associate professor of learning, teaching and curriculum, is expected to serve throughout the summer, according to the email.

The announcement comes months after an ESPN "Outside the Lines" report stated that MU officials improperly handled the case of former Missouri athlete Sasha Menu Courey, according to previous Missourian reporting.

An executive order from UM System President Tim Wolfe in April obligated system employees to report sexual harassment and assault against students, provided they are not bound by confidentiality.

A report released later that week criticized MU's actions in the Menu Courey case and made suggestions for improving compliance with Title IX such as immediate reporting of sexual assaults of students on campus.
MU engineering dean stepping down

By the Tribune's staff

Monday, June 9, 2014 at 3:36 pm Comments (3)

University of Missouri College of Engineering Dean Jim Thompson announced Monday that he is stepping down from his post after almost 20 years in office.

In a brief email to the college’s faculty, Thompson doesn’t provide any indication about his future plans or if this is his retirement. Thompson’s last day will be Sept. 1, he writes.

“We should all be proud of the College, which has excellent students and a continuing increase in enrollment,” he said in the email. He notes the successes the college has seen during the last two decades, including new programs in bioengineering, computer science and information technology.

The email also notes the state legislature’s approval of funds to renovate Lafferre Hall, where the engineering school’s main facilities are housed.

“The College is well-positioned to continue to grow and improve both in educational programs and research,” Thompson writes. “Thank you for your cooperation and friendship over the years.”

Interim Provost Ken Dean and Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin praised Thompson's work in a university news release. Under his tenure, research and funding for the engineering school increased "substantially," new programs were implemented, the release said. Enrollment in the College of Engineering more than doubled over the past 20 years.
COLUMBIA — MU College of Engineering Dean James Thompson will step down effective Sept. 1, according to an MU news release.

Dean Thompson has been the dean of the college since 1994, according to his biography page on the college's website. Prior to his current role, Thompson was the dean of engineering at the University of New Mexico.

During his tenure at MU, he has overseen the expansion of engineering-based research and education programs including bioengineering, computer science and information technology, according to the college's website. Undergraduate enrollment more than doubled to 2,886 in 2014 from 1,360 in 1994, according to MU's Division of Enrollment Management.

"Much has changed during his leadership, and we look forward to building on the college's excellent reputation in all of its disciplines," Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin said in the news release.

Interim Provost Ken Dean said Thompson is leaving the college in a good place.

"Dean Thompson leaves the College of Engineering well positioned to move to the next level in research and cutting-edge, market-responsive education programs," Dean said in the release.

Harry Tyrer, an electrical and computer engineering professor, who worked with Thompson frequently during the beginning of his term, said he "did the right things for the college."

"He had a vision in his mind and he wanted others to go with it," Tyrer said.
The release gave no reason for Thompson stepping down. Attempts to reach MU spokesman Christian Basi were unsuccessful.

MU faculty have concerns about move to boost university’s standing

Goal is to boost AAU reputation.

By Ashley Jost

Monday, June 9, 2014 at 2:00 pm Comments (1)

As the next fiscal year approaches, concerns are growing among faculty about how the University of Missouri will deal with a mandatory 2 percent budget reallocation from every department.

The yearly reallocation that kicks in during fiscal year 2015, which starts in July, is required under the university's strategic plan. The goal is for all of the reallocated dollars to go into a pool to bring new faculty to campus and give faculty raises, both moves that could help the university's standing within the Association of American Universities.

MU Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin visited the Faculty Council last week to address concerns about reallocation and announced his plans to create an advisory committee that will recommend ways to use the new pool of dollars and address other issues related to the reallocation process. The committee will include faculty, staff and students, as well as administrators who can provide context of some decision-making, Loftin said.

"The problem is we may not be able to wait for a reallocation council to be formed," Loftin said. "I don't know. But, I do hope to use that council as my primary tool."
Loftin said he likely will have to make some decisions about this fiscal year's reallocation before the committee is in place because the selection process of members has yet to begin.

Some of the concerns about reallocation stem from recent layoffs in the Office of Research by Hank Foley, senior vice chancellor for research and graduate studies. Foley laid off eight employees in the Office of Research — including six in the Office of Grant Writing and Publications — in May, citing the need to reallocate $714,000 from his budget. It came down to cutting people or cutting programs, he said at the time.

The chancellor also told faculty he has received "a number of" waiver requests from departments and programs hoping to be exempt from the reallocation process, including the Office of Research. All but those related to scholarships and campus safety have been denied, he said.

Faculty Council Chairman Craig Roberts, who was re-elected to his post for a second term last week, said his biggest concern about reallocation right now is that critical spots needing to be filled will be lost to attrition because it's "the easy choice."

"I fear the deans will pass the buck and won't close programs but instead pass until it's at the department or division chair level and they have to come up with the 2 percent," Roberts said. "That's done by not filling vacancies. That 2 percent should come from programs that are low priority, programs that are redundant or small. It takes some guts, unselfishness and some clear thinking to do that. But the easy and lazy way out is to not close programs and go for a salary line."

Roberts said not filling vacancies "is how budgets have been balanced for many years."

Loftin warned faculty that sitting on this committee wouldn't be a light task. He wants the members to be well-educated on the issues they will deal with so he can receive recommendations he can use.

In the meantime, he is starting to talk with deans of every college about new faculty hires in preparation for July. Some hires could be authorized shortly after the new fiscal year, but it will depend on multiple budget factors, including how the 5.2 percent increase the UM System is set to receive from the state will be distributed to the four campuses. Loftin said he expects UM System President Tim Wolfe to make that announcement later this month.
Round up: FOIA Friday and confidential reporting

By ASHLEY JOST

Summer silence - or at least summer quiet - has kicked in within the higher education world. Or is that just me?

- I have started filing one sunshine law request every week. When it’s appropriate, I will include each week’s request response in my round up. I won’t include it if the document is related to a story I’m working on at that point in time, but many of the requests will be random. A records request a week keeps the proverbial doctor away… or something like that.

This week’s request was for bills related to construction, upgrades and purchases made to or for the MU chancellor’s residence since December 2013. MU Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin was named the chancellor in December, and he started in February. You’ll see there have been about $30,000 worth of charges to the chancellor’s residence since December. The biggest expense was about $13,000 to replace worn carpet in the second floor and stairwells. You can see the other expenses in the attached document.

In case you missed it, I actually started this records request project last week with the conflict of interest reports from the University of Missouri Board of Curators.

- U.S. Sen. Claire McCaskill, D-MO, hosted her second round table discussion about campus sexual assaults on Monday. The discussion was geared toward Title IX and among those invited to speak was Deborah Noble-Triplett, assistant vice president for academic affairs at the UM System.

Noble-Triplett mentioned during the round table talk that the UM System task force is exploring the use of “confidential reporters.” John Fougere, UM System chief communications officer, said he didn’t want to specify what the task force is looking at in terms of the responsibilities of a confidential reporter, or who would fill that role, because everything still is under consideration.

In some cases, a confidential reporter means victims can report to the reporter and the reporter has the ability to withhold some information to the Title IX coordinator, at the victim’s wishes. But it looks like we won’t know what exactly the task force is thinking about until we get through this second phase of its charge.
Faculty Council approved the 2016-17 academic calendar during its Thursday meeting. I’ve attached the calendar for your viewing pleasure.

In case you missed it, higher education folks from all over Missouri were in Columbia Thursday for the Governing Board Forum. There was some doom and gloom budget chat, among a few other things.

Additionally, Faculty Council heard from interim chief operating officer Gary Ward Thursday about what could be next for Pickard Hall, which is contaminated with radiation.

MU is opening bids next week for demolition of University Village. Demolition is anticipated to take place in mid-July or early August.

Outside the system:
- Alan Marble was named the president of Missouri Southern State University Wednesday after a year of serving as the interim president. I had the chance to talk with Marble briefly at the Governing Board Forum yesterday about the biggest challenge ahead for him. He told me it’s the university’s deficit. He said this year they’re cutting it in half, an they’ll try to do that again next year.

- As of today (Friday), this post isn’t behind the Chronicle’s paywall. I hope you get to read it before it’s sucked away. The article is about how, 40 years ago, no one anticipated Title IX would hold colleges accountable for handling sexual assault cases. Really fascinating read that puts a lot of what we’re seeing now into context.

- Happy Friday! An amusing read for journalism/communication folks courtesy of our crime reporter, Alan. “News jargon, explained:” a hilarious take from a blogger on what journo jargon means.

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Student loan plan benefits St. Louis graduates

**By Koran Addo kaddo@post-dispatch.com > 314-340-8305**

Ruth and Michael Mueller’s lives would probably look a lot different if not for the combined $25,000 in student loan debt the former St. Louis University students are struggling to pay off.

The two, both 29, have a plan: Use their advanced science degrees — a doctorate for him, a master’s for her — to start their own consulting business.

So far, it’s been a grind for the St. Louis couple.
Their situation might have gotten a little easier on Monday, however, with President Barack Obama issuing an executive order that will keep student loan payments at no more than 10 percent of a borrower’s monthly income.

Ruth Mueller works full time. Her husband is currently unemployed as he tries to get the business started. Mueller said their combined student loan payments eat up between 20 and 25 percent of her monthly take-home pay.

Their financial situation forced them to put a lot of their plans on hold, including having children, Mueller said.

“It’s a burden,” she said. “We can’t afford to save money or do more things with the business because we have this extra expense.”

Obama’s executive action would essentially cut the Muellers’ monthly student loan bill in half. By signing the presidential memorandum, an estimated 5 million borrowers nationwide could see a similar benefit.

It’s called the “Pay as You Earn” plan, and nearly two-thirds of Missouri graduates could get some relief.

Leanne Cardwell, an associate commissioner with the state Department of Higher Education, said that 63 percent of Missouri students who earn a diploma from a four-year university graduate with some student loan debt. Each of those graduates owes about $23,000 when they leave school, she added.

Obama’s announcement is an extension of a plan he announced in 2010. That plan created the 10 percent repayment cap, but only for students who took out loans after October 2007. Additionally, borrowers who kept up with their payments would have their remaining debt wiped clean after 20 years.

Monday’s executive action extended the same deal to borrowers who took out loans before 2007.

“I’m only here because this country gave me a chance through education,” Obama said. “We are here today because we believe that in America, no hardworking young person should be priced out of a higher education.”

The cost and value of higher education has emerged as a talking point for college leaders around the country as student loan debt passed the $1 trillion mark, surpassing the nation’s credit card debt.

Obama also announced that he is directing the government to renegotiate contracts with federal student loan servicers to help borrowers avoid defaulting. The president also asked the Treasury and Education departments to work with major tax preparers to increase awareness of tuition tax credits and flexible repayment options available to borrowers.

“It’s going to make progress, but not enough,” Obama said. “We need more.”
Ryan Law, director of the University of Missouri-Columbia Office for Student Financial Success, said he couldn’t speak at length about the plan without knowing all the details, but added that the president’s reasoning is sound.

“We have too many students with too much debt,” he said. “The more borrowers we have paying less into student loans is a good thing.”

It’s a common sentiment. St. Louis native Timothy Rainey, 33, has whittled his debt down to about $30,000 after leaving Mount Mary College in Milwaukee with $70,000 in student loans.

Rainey, who has returned to St. Louis to work as a counselor, said he’s seen a number of his friends get trapped in a debt cycle in which they opt to go back to school in pursuit of advanced degrees because of dim job prospects.

“The education system in this country is a business,” he said. “It kind of locks you into a system of debt.”

Rainey said the “Pay as You Earn” plan could put him closer to some of his goals.

“Every little bit of savings helps right now,” he said. “It’s kind of hard to plan for kids and save up money for a house and things like that when you have student loans.”

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

June 10, 2014

College Headhunters, Accustomed to Secrecy, Find Themselves Under Scrutiny

By Jack Stripling

NO MU MENTION

Good college headhunters are mostly invisible.
These highly paid consultants, who have significant influence over how academic-leadership searches play out, pride themselves on being behind-the-scenes facilitators, connecting governing boards and search committees with dream candidates. But times have changed. The often politicized and sometimes rancorous process of selecting college leaders has come under greater public scrutiny, and the search-firm industry now finds itself on the defensive.

On Monday a well-known search consultant resigned from his advising role at Florida State University, where professors are fuming about a presidential search that has been upended by a lawmaker’s interest in the job. R. William (Bill) Funk’s decision to step aside came days after the Faculty Senate issued a vote of no confidence in the headhunter. Mr. Funk, president of R. William Funk & Associates, called the vote "ridiculous."

"I candidly think it was reckless and unfounded," he said.

Over this past weekend, while on vacation in Las Vegas, Mr. Funk said he had come to the conclusion that the candidacy of State Sen. John E. Thrasher, a powerful Republican who is a Florida State alumnus, had made it impossible for the university to attract strong contenders. Some observers have said that the emergence of another high-profile candidate, the chief justice of the Florida Supreme Court, makes Senator Thrasher seem like less of a shoo-in and generates more potential interest from other applicants. But Mr. Funk said he was unconvinced.

"I just didn’t see a win down the road for us," he said. "A win would be just an excellent candidate selected that we recruited, and we didn’t think we could recruit people we would be proud of under the circumstances."

Mr. Funk initially advised the search committee to take an up-or-down vote on Mr. Thrasher, saying that the senator had cast such a long shadow over the process that the committee had to either pick him or move on. But that advice created the impression in some quarters that the consultant was trying to accelerate the process for an applicant with an inside track.
"There was such paranoia here that when we made that proposal, they interpreted us as being part of a cabal to hire Thrasher, when in fact we were being as honest as we could be," Mr. Funk said.

The no-confidence vote in Mr. Funk appears to be the first of its kind involving a search consultant. Mr. Funk said he was "mystified at how we got to be the focus of some attention."

The vote, however, is just one indication of professors’ growing skepticism about a private industry that plays an outsize role in selecting academic leaders.

**Conflicts Over Confidentiality**

At Illinois Wesleyan University, which concluded a search for a new provost three years ago, professors are still grappling with what they learned about the influence of search consultants. During a 2010 meeting, the headhunter warned members of the search committee not to promise their colleagues that the search would include a public phase, the group’s chairman recalls. The best candidates often fear jeopardizing their current positions, the committee was told, and utmost confidentiality may be necessary to land the right person.

"I knew right away that this was going to be a kind of tricky situation," said the chairman, Michael J. Theune, who is an associate professor of English.

When committee members floated the idea that the university’s next provost might be named without ever meeting with the full faculty, a minor revolt ensued. "Emotions ran high," Mr. Theune said.

The tensions that emerged at Illinois Wesleyan—and, to some extent, now at Florida State—mirror those in searches across the nation. Faculty members, many of whom have never participated in an administrative search, are often out of their depth when the process begins. They are used to being the experts in the room, but on these occasions they defer to the knowledge of outsiders, who bring with them a host of
cautionary tales about searches that have imploded when candidates’ names leaked to newspapers.

Headhunters’ preaching about the value of confidentiality clashes with an academic culture that honors transparency and consensus.

At the urging of the faculty, Illinois Wesleyan’s president decided that the provost search should include an open phase for finalists. There is no indication that any strong candidates were scared off or withdrew because of that decision, which has left some professors to wonder whether search consultants are needlessly making the process more secretive.

"It is a trend, but it is a trend because they created it," said Hans-Joerg Tiede, a professor and chairman of computer science at Illinois Wesleyan.

Mr. Tiede and Mr. Theune wrote a report on provost searches that will be presented on Friday at the annual conference of the American Association of University Professors, in Washington. In a survey of 72 private, liberal-arts colleges, they found evidence that colleges that use search firms are nearly four times as likely to make search-committee members sign confidentiality agreements.

The use of search firms for provosts at liberal-arts colleges has soared in recent years, the survey found. Only 31 percent of the respondents used a search firm from 1997 to 2007. For searches that occurred from 2007 to 2012, 75 percent used a consultant.

Mr. Theune said the study raises questions about the influence of search firms, but he is careful to note that Anne M. Coyle, the search consultant whom Illinois Wesleyan hired, did not force her opinions on the committee. She laid out the possible ramifications of their decisions, he said, but stressed that "this is your faculty’s search."

"I’m not exactly sure how that process would or could have worked without some of the assistance that was given to us by the search firm," Mr. Theune said.
Risking Exposure

The world has changed a lot since Ms. Coyle got into the executive-search business, more than two decades ago. In her early days as a consultant, she would call up candidates and tell them to stand by their fax machines so that no one else in the office would intercept sensitive documents.

Email has made those sub-rosa communiqués a lot easier, but technology also threatens the clandestine nature of the executive search. Now more than ever, a candidate who visits a campus risks exposure back home. With one click of a cellphone camera, a student can unmask a would-be president.

"Information travels so much more quickly," said Ms. Coyle, a vice president at Storbeck/Pimentel & Associates. "Twenty years ago, you could visit a campus, maybe even have a meeting with the full faculty, and perhaps nobody would even know where you were."

Search firms are paid by colleges, and the tab can be hundreds of thousands of dollars for a major research institution. Even though headhunters work for colleges, they often appear most interested in satisfying applicants. Both colleges and consultants stand to benefit, headhunters say, when candidates feel they have been protected throughout the search process.

"We’re hired by the client, but it’s really the candidates whose lives we can put into turmoil," said Kenneth L. Kring, co-managing director for global education practice at Korn Ferry. "My truest loyalty is to the candidates."

Search consultants emphasize the need for confidentiality in the interest of protecting applicants, but secrecy also ensures that headhunters will have a private roster of names to use in future searches.

Search consultants have a financial interest in keeping candidates’ names under wraps, said Clay Shirky, who writes about how the Internet has upset old power structures by making information widely available.
"We are absolutely biased as a culture, if not a species, to regard information we think of as private as being inherently more valuable," said Mr. Shirky, an associate professor of journalism at New York University and author of *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing Without Organizations* (Penguin Press, 2008).

"In a way, search firms need to make what they do look more valuable than what it is," he continued. "In fact, it’s just the act of collating Rolodexes and seeing who is interested."

Search consultants may have a variety of reasons for advising colleges to keep a tight lid on the names of applicants, but state open-records laws can complicate that task at public institutions. In Florida, for example, the names of applicants and nominees are released early in the process. Consultants have found a way around that, however, by encouraging the strongest applicants not to formally apply until the last minute. For candidates, particularly sitting presidents, open search processes can create awkwardness back home.

In 2012, Ricardo Azziz, president of Georgia Regents University, was nominated for the University of Florida presidency. He did not even know who had nominated him, he told *The Chronicle*, but he had to field some uncomfortable questions from reporters.

"It’s a disadvantage for Florida," he said of the open search process. "It’s too much exposure for presidents."

In March, Mr. Azziz’s name surfaced again in connection with a presidential search, this time at the University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley. When the news got out, he removed himself from consideration.

Mr. Azziz’s experience highlights some of the difficulties candidates face because they have no control over how a search process will unfold. He said that he had been given assurances that his name would be released only if he was a finalist for the job, but that the search committee had reversed its decision.

Asked if he felt betrayed, Mr. Azziz said, "It doesn’t shine well on the process."
When the process is flawed, search consultants can expect some of the blame as well as heightened scrutiny of the fees they command. Mr. Funk, who withdrew as Florida State’s consultant, conceded that "we get paid a lot of money." His firm earned $230,000, for example, for its work on a recently concluded presidential search at Ohio State University.

Mr. Funk acknowledged that the high pay he earns can lead to tough questions about whether he is helping or hurting the search process.

"There is an intrinsic suspicion on the part of some constituents of the search firm that somehow the search firm is being paid by the board or by the university, and hence their views and visions are skewed," he said. "I wouldn’t have survived in this business for 30 years if that were the case."

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Dual-language immersion program proposed at Columbia School Board meeting

COLUMBIA — The Columbia School Board got an extensive preview of a proposed dual-language immersion plan at its meeting Monday night.

If approved, the proposed Spanish and English immersion program would start for kindergarteners during the 2015-16 school year. Missouri Learning Standards would continue to be in effect and would be taught in both languages instead of just English. Kindergarten classrooms would have 20 to 22 students with half the students being dominant English-speakers and the other half dominant Spanish-speakers.

"Dual-language immersion prepares students to achieve academically and positions them to be successful bilingual citizens," said Peter Stiepleman, incoming superintendent and the current assistant superintendent of elementary education.
According to the district’s data presented by Stiepleman, there has been an enrollment increase overall in the English Language Learning program, and more Hispanic families have joined the district. From 2010 to 2013, there has been an increase in proficiency in English Language Arts among ELL students but proficiency is declining among Hispanic students.

"The dual immersion is the most successful educational approach for children who come to school speaking a language other than English, such as many of our Hispanic children here in Columbia," said Lisa Dorner, assistant professor of educational leadership and policy analysis at MU. Dorner has researched dual immersion programs for the past decade.

Research shows that a dual immersion program would not just benefit students who are primarily Spanish-speaking, but it would help all youth in Columbia, according to Dorner.

"The best way to learn a language is to immerse yourself in it and study that content material through the language," Dorner said.

By fifth grade, test results of students who went through the program show high academic achievement, bilingual proficiency and global awareness. Also, skills for students that go through the program include stronger self-control and attention skills and higher meta-cognitive and metalinguistic skills, according to research presented by Dorner.

Two models of the program were explained at the meeting. One model is called the "90/10" model and the other the "50/50" model. With the 90/10 model, 90 percent of the general curriculum would be taught in Spanish and 10 percent would be taught in English. With the 50/50 model, the curriculum would be taught in half Spanish and half English.

Teachers in elementary schools would need to demonstrate proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing in Spanish in order for the program to be successful, said Shelly Fair, ELL coordinator for Columbia Public Schools.

"The most important thing to stress on this proposal is that we don't anticipate budget increases," Stiepleman said.
If the program were to move forward, the district would start buying school supplies written in Spanish as well as English.

"I think innovation is about timing, and I personally think this is the right time," said Chris Belcher, outgoing superintendent of Columbia Public Schools. "The populations are there. The interest from the community is there."

The board will hear a formal proposal later in the fall.

**Other action at School Board meeting**

- Belcher said goodbye to his fellow board members in his last board meeting Monday night. Belcher will be replaced by Stiepleman in July.

- Deputy Superintendent Nick Boren presented each of the district schools' specific maintenance and repairs for the summer, detailed in a slideshow presented to the board. The summer maintenance and repair costs are approximately $48 million, Boren said.

- Linda Quinley, the district's chief financial officer, reviewed the 2014-15 budget. The budget was presented to the board for corrections in preparation for the June 19 board meeting, during which the proposed budget will most likely pass.

- The board's meeting concluded with the review of budget amendments and the election of Tracy Davenport for the board’s secretary position and Linda Quinley for board treasurer.