MU again explores idea of hotel, conference center

Wednesday, September 3, 2014

BY Isabelle Gustafson

COLUMBIA — MU has hired PKF Consulting to conduct a market study for a proposed hotel and conference center that would be located near campus, according to an email sent Wednesday to faculty and staff.

The email included a link to a survey intended to help MU officials determine the need for a hotel and conference center, not just for the university but for the community, MU spokesman Christian Basi said. This will be an open process, he said.

The consulting firm has met with representatives of local hotels, Basi said.

MU has no further plans until the survey is completed, which will be in the next three weeks. "This is the preliminary first step," Basi said.

PKF Consulting is a firm of management consultants, industry specialists and appraisers who provide various services to the hospitality, real estate and tourism industries, according to its website. The company helps clients such as MU conduct market and financial feasibility studies. These include area reviews, site analyses, supply and demand analyses, estimated financial statements and project recommendations.

PKF Consulting is being paid about $35,000 for the study, Basi said.

In 2004, MU abandoned hotel plans after three years of seeking approval to lease 25 acres for construction, according to previous Missourian reporting.

The plan had been to lease the property at College Avenue and Stadium Boulevard to a developer. The money from the lease would have been used to build a $40 million to $50 million performing arts center to be supplemented by private funds.

"As the community has grown and Mizzou has grown, we're taking another look at it," Basi said.
The University of Missouri is facing a decline in federal research dollars, according to preliminary fiscal year 2014 numbers.

MU and the University of Missouri System are both seeing a decline for the year. That decline isn’t unique to the university, but rather an indication of a national trend in higher education research and development.

Hank Foley, executive vice president of academic affairs for the UM System and senior vice chancellor for research and graduate studies at MU, said the decrease in federal grants and contracts is a “pretty bad” drop but not as severe as at other schools.

Preliminary numbers indicate that for fiscal year 2014, the university brought in about $213.7 million worth of federal research dollars, compared to $228.9 million during fiscal year 2013. The drop is about 7 percent.

At the UM System level, the drop is 5.8 percent. The only UM System school with an increase in federal research expenditures was Missouri University of Science and Technology in Rolla, which had a 1.1 percent boost. The largest decline was 17 percent at the St. Louis campus.

“Government programs and the federal agencies that fund research have been basically flat in real dollars,” Foley said. “It’s hard times. It’s a clear-cut, national trend.”

Most years, Foley said the UM System is “flat to small growth” in terms of research dollars. MU, however, “bounces around.”

“This is normal for MU, but we want to get on a positive growth trajectory,” he said. “The first goal is to try and put a floor below this if we can, then start to power out of that if we can.”

The decrease in funding for research ties back to the way the federal government funds the agencies that provide those dollars to institutions. A coalition of education groups, Close the Innovation Deficit, has formed to focus on those declining dollars. Among the group’s leaders is the prestigious Association of American Universities, of which MU is a member.
Barry Toiv, Association of American Universities vice president for public affairs, said there is no question that the pool of research funds is gradually shrinking and that, over time, all institutions will be affected.

“I can’t say every institution’s funding has shrunk, but over time, it will hit all of them,” Toiv said. “I can speak to this as a problem everyone is facing.”

Toiv compared the impact of funding decreases to the effects termites have on a house — devastation that comes quietly over a long time. The goal of the Close the Innovation Deficit coalition is to bring congressional attention to funding issues.

“The country may not realize what has happened until it’s waiting for those discoveries that result in new industries and jobs,” Toiv said.

U.S. Sen. Claire McCaskill, D-Mo., said in a statement that cutting the funding to agencies that ultimately goes toward research is “shortsighted.” McCaskill attributed the higher education research funding downturn to tea party conservatives.

Foley said he only has anecdotal evidence about the effect of less research money on other institutions and won’t have hard data until the National Science Foundation publishes its annual research and development data next year.

“In terms of turning it around, we’re doing everything we can,” Foley said, adding that there are increased investments in people and equipment on the docket to help. Additionally, he said there’s a focus on research that lends itself to real-world applications to set MU apart from the pack.

Bringing in a new medical school dean later this year, investing in more faculty and using seed money to get new programs off the ground are among Foley’s plans to address the situation.

Mizzou A.D. Mike Alden addresses Dorial Green-Beckham, football scheduling, facilities

BY TOD PALMER
THE KANSAS CITY STAR

Missouri athletic director Mike Alden said the university did not support former Tigers wide receiver Dorial Green-Beckham’s appeal for immediate eligibility at Oklahoma.
Green-Beckham’s appeal was denied Aug. 22 and he must sit out the 2014 season under the NCAA’s transfer rules. Alden said Missouri offered no opinion about the NCAA ruling.

Oklahoma sought a waiver under the NCAA’s “run-off rule,” which allows players who can’t return to their team for reasons outside their control to play right away with their new team.

“The NCAA never came to me and asked me anything about the waiver,” Alden said Wednesday during a meeting with reporters at Mizzou Arena.

As part of the appeal process initiated by the Sooners, Missouri provided the NCAA information about Green-Beckham’s time with the football program and on campus, which is standard procedure in any transfer situation.

That was the extent of MU’s involvement, though Alden said he had several conversations with Oklahoma athletic director Joe Castiglione that included dialogue about Green-Beckham.

Last week, MU chancellor R. Bowen Loftin said he wasn’t consulted about the decision to dismiss Green-Beckham in April after his name surfaced in an alleged burglary and assault.

According to a Columbia Police report, Green-Beckham allegedly broke into an off-campus apartment looking for his girlfriend and pushed a female roommate down several stairs in the course of searching the duplex. No arrests were made.

“I had nothing to do with coach (Gary) Pinkel’s decision,” Loftin said. “He actually called Mike Alden and told Mike it was his desire to dismiss DGB. Mike then called me and I said, ‘You guys take care of it.’ Do what’s right was my point.

“I didn’t make any decision personally, but I applauded coach Pinkel for his courage to take out probably his best receiver. But that was his call, and the A.D. and I both supported it strongly.”

Loftin said there was no appeal, nor a possible appeal, of Pinkel’s decision.
Green-Beckham also was subject to MU’s student-conduct process, which resulted in Loftin banning Green-Beckham from campus in April.

It’s unclear if Green-Beckham, who was the highest profile recruit Missouri has landed during Pinkel’s 14-year tenure, continued attending class.

Loftin said Green-Beckham “elected to leave the university” before the student-conduct process ended, but officially he remained an MU student until June 2.

Alden said Green-Beckham’s dismissal wasn’t meant to be an impactful statement after several months of legal entanglements by student-athletes.

Alden also addressed several other topics Wednesday:

**Football scheduling**

Missouri played at Central Florida in 2012, travels to Toledo on Saturday and plays at Arkansas State next season.

It’s a unique — and, quite frankly, unwanted — result of changing conferences that the Tigers plan to phase out of future football schedules.

“In the future, our plans, what we would like to do in our road games, would have that be against one of the power five conferences,” Alden said.

Beginning in 2016, all Southeastern Conference schools are required to play at least one non-conference game against a team from the Atlantic Coast, Big Ten, Big 12 or Pac-12 conferences.

Missouri doesn’t expect to have any non-conference games against a team from the power five conferences next season and still doesn’t have one scheduled for 2016.

Alden indicated that Missouri remains interested in a neutral-site game in Kansas City or St. Louis as long as the schedule includes at least six home games at Memorial Stadium.
He also confirmed that there have been preliminary discussions about resuming a series against Illinois, though he said it wouldn’t take place in the near term.

New tech announced for Mizzou Arena

Missouri is renovating the basketball locker rooms and other support areas at Mizzou Arena. Fans won’t see those upgrades, but they certainly will notice a new Panasonic video board set to be installed for the 2014-15 season.

Plans also are advancing for a new indoor football practice facility behind the Mizzou Athletic Training Complex and a new softball stadium east of the Hearnes Center.

Alden said both projects are in the general design phase, but he expects an architect to be selected in January and approved by the Board of Curators with the goal of opening a new softball stadium for the 2017 season.

That means Missouri will not play host to the 2015 SEC softball championship as originally planned. Instead, the Tigers hope to host the conference tourney in 2018 or 2019.

Alden again said Hearnes eventually will be replaced, but there is still no timetable nor a plan.

Renovation draws raves

Alden said the Memorial Stadium east-side expansion’s debut was a hit Saturday with fans.

“That facility and the feedback we’ve gotten on that has been amazing,” he said. “It’s certainly a big-time facility, and it’s something that adds to Faurot Field probably unlike anything else we’ve done.”

Alden also said he was pleased with the crowd of 60,589 for a Labor Day weekend game, which he said was the second-largest for a Labor Day opener in 20 seasons.
COLUMBIA, Mo. * Missouri athletics director Mike Alden met with local media on Wednesday to discuss a variety of topics, from facility projects, to football scheduling to Mizzou’s recent rash of national headlines.

Here’s a recap:

* Sometime after the new year, MU will submit bids to the university board of curators to approve architects to handle the two major facility renovations: a new softball stadium and a new indoor football practice facility. Once the firms are approved, they’ll spend between seven to 12 months on designing the new facilities, Alden said. The target season for opening the new softball stadium is 2017. The stadium will be built along Stadium Boulevard east of the Hearnes Center.

The new softball stadium will be built on Lot M, where many fans currently park for football games. Those spots will be replaced, Alden said. “There won’t be any parking spaces gained but there won’t be any lost,” he said.

* Missouri was set to host the 2015 SEC postseason softball tournament, but the school has asked to swap out of its place in the rotation so it can host the event in the new stadium, in 2018 or beyond.

* Speaking of, the Hearnes will eventually be replaced, Alden said, but there’s no current timetable for those plans. Mizzou volleyball, wrestling, gymnastics and indoor track use the building for their home events.

* Mizzou Arena is getting a new Panasonic videoboard for the upcoming season. The decision to replace the 10-year old board was approved Tuesday. “It’s a pretty significant investment,” Alden said. MU is also renovating the men’s team locker room and other support areas for the men’s team at Mizzou Arena.

* As for football scheduling, Alden said Mizzou will eventually phase out playing road games at schools that are not in the power conferences — like Saturday’s game at Toledo and next year’s game at Arkansas State.

“In the future, our road games, what we’d like to do, is have that be against … the other four (power) conferences and have the other games be home games here,” he said. “That’s the plan.”
From 2006-13, Missouri has played three nonconference road games against teams outside of the power five: at Central Florida in 2012; at Nevada in 2009; and at New Mexico in 2006. The Tigers are scheduled to play at Wyoming in 2019 and at Memphis in 2020.

* That said, it “will be a really difficult thing” for Missouri to add a power conference team to the 2015 nonconference schedule, Alden said. Mizzou has two openings for nonconference games next year and Alden said one of those games could be on the road. Missouri is required to schedule one power conference team starting in 2016 per the SEC’s new scheduling mandate. In 2017-18, MU fulfills the requirement with a two-year series against Purdue.

* Missouri has not ruled out future neutral-site games, as long as the school maintains at least six games in Columbia. “St. Louis is very interested in the Tigers and I know Kansas City is very interested in the Tigers, too,” Alden said.

* Alden and Illinois athletics director Mike Thomas have had preliminary discussions about reviving the MU-Illini football series but nothing for “the near term.”

“In the future, is that a game we’d want to take a look at playing? Absolutely,” Alden said. “Whether that’s in Champaign and Columbia, whether that’s in St. Louis or maybe Chicago, something like that …”

* There is no movement at MU or within the SEC to stop playing Football Championship Subdivision teams. “For us, and for many of us in the SEC, we see those games as important for us,” Alden said. “Frankly, I think they’re important for college football, too.”

* Alden stopped short of guaranteeing that Missouri will never cut any of its non-revenue programs, but he said there’s a strong university commitment, from the chancellor on down, to keep all 20 programs in place. “I will tell you, with the shift of what’s going on in governance, that’s a real threat to college athletics,” he said. “I think you’re going to see schools take a look at Olympic sports … and take them away. I don’t anticipate that happening at Mizzou. I’ve heard about that since I got here (in 1998). For all these years people have talked about, ‘Are we looking to drop sports?’ That’s not our intention. That’s not our plan.”

* When Missouri decided on its fiscal budget for the 2014-15, it did not plan for any revenue from the new SEC Network — only because schools didn’t know an exact figure for the network’s value. What will that revenue figure be per school? “I’m pretty confident it’s going to be more than zero,” Alden said. “I’m not trying to be flippant. But what that number is going to be, we’re not sure. … Stay tuned.”

* There has been rampant speculation among fans and some media that Missouri supported Dorial Green-Beckham’s pursuit of an NCAA waiver to play immediately at Oklahoma this season. (The NCAA has since rejected the waiver claim.) Alden clarified Mizzou’s role in the waiver process: “Any time a student-athlete leaves your program, the NCAA requires you to verify that they were there as part of your program. That’s what we did. We verified that he was part of our program here at the University of Missouri. We verified the issues that took place and that he was no longer part of of our program here at Mizzou.
“As far as supporting (the waiver) or whatever that may be, our role was verifying what had taken place here, which was all widely reported, and to verify that he’d been here at Mizzou and was no longer part of our team.”

Alden said he had talks with Oklahoma AD Joe Castiglione about the situation but declined to share anything from their conversation.

Alden wouldn’t say whether Green-Beckham’s dismissal in April was influenced by the rash of off-field incidents and negative publicity that Mizzou was dealt last spring.

“Were there a series of incidents we dealt with? Absolutely,” he said. “But knowing we went through all of that, I don’t believe that attributed to us making that decision. We made that decision on its own. But I wouldn’t want to speculate, ‘If we didn’t have all of this stuff, would it be different?’”

* Alden reiterated his stance that many people were to blame across the university for the Title IX failings related to the Sasha Menu Courey and Derrick Washington sexual assault incidents.

“The ability for us to elevate for our faculty, staff and students know more about Title IX requirements and reporting, it’s much greater today,” he said. “But I’ve got to tell you, I’m pretty confident in this: Mizzou was not alone in this several years ago and even today. That’s been a huge wake-up for people nationally. We talk about the fact that these issues are going on on our campuses today, (and) we’re much better equipped from a communications standpoint to at least address it than any of us were several years ago.”

* Asked if he believes Missouri has been unfairly targeted by ESPN and “Outside the Lines” in recent months — for three stories about the suicide and rape allegations by Menu Courey, the Antlers student fan group and the Washington rape allegations and ensuing Title IX failings — Alden replied, “ESPN or whoever, in this case ESPN, they do the work they feel is necessary. I don’t see that they were targeting Mizzou. … It just so happened to be that we were featured three different times in the course of four months.”

Aside from the internal changes the university has made in the wake of these incidents, is Alden concerned about Mizzou having an image problem? “You’re always working to make sure you’re representing the institution in a positive way. Our students, by and large, do a great job of that. With those stories, do you take a hit on that? Sure you do. It would be naive if you didn’t think you did. But overall is there an image problem? I wouldn’t say that. I would say those types of stories or exposure are not positive. Those are things you want to be able to respond to and that you have to recognize that you’re constantly working on your brand all the time.”
Afterthoughts on the rock climbing wall with Diane Dahlmann

By Ashley Jost

Wednesday, September 3, 2014 at 10:46 am

I received a few emails after running a story this past weekend on the University of Missouri rock climbing wall at the recreation complex and discussions about taking it down and using that space for weightlifting.

Among those emails was a note from an interested person saying they heard that administrators decided to hold off on the renovation project to talk more with other stakeholders, particularly after a number of students, alumni, faculty and even parents of students have written about this issue via a Facebook page called "Save the Mizzou Rec Rock Wall."

Diane Dahlmann, director of recreation services and facilities at MU, said yesterday afternoon that “there isn’t anything new or different about how we are proceeding as we consider our options.”

Dahlmann has read the testimonials posted on social media, she said, calling them “marvelous.”

“That’s anecdotal evidence that’s always been very hard to capture, but now, suddenly, it’s very easy,” she said. “We certainly welcome that, but this was never a quick process. We are still looking at the feasibility of this project and problem solving our space issue.”

Dahlmann said it’s incorrect to say the project has been slowed down. The decision-making process on renovation is a slow process in general, she said, but nothing has changed since she made the announcement to her student workers last weekend about the possibility of renovating.

The expansion of the free-weight room into the rock wall space could happen as early as winter break, or it could never happen at all, Dahlmann said. Conversations with Cathy Scroggs, vice chancellor for student affairs, are still in progress. Both are also inviting more input from the campus community.

“I’m pleased to see student participation,” Dahlmann said. “When students engage in the process - is there anything better?”
As of yesterday, Dahlmann said seven year-long memberships to the wall have been sold this semester, which started Aug. 25. She acknowledged that many climbers are still outside while the weather allows it.

Between Sept. 1 2013 to Monday, Dahlmann said there were 93 year-long memberships purchased.

**MU good news**

Opening-day cheers

By Henry J. Waters III

Wednesday, September 3, 2014 at 11:30 am Comments (I)

University of Missouri officials always do a snapshot of their student body on opening day. This year the image is particularly bright.

MU has the largest class on record, the largest contingent of international students and the most high-ability students: those with ACT scores of 30 or higher.

Incoming freshmen have an ACT mean score higher than the average of the past three years, partly the result of financial incentives for high-achieving students, many from out of state.

High-achieving students are more likely to remain in school. At 86 percent, the current student retention rate is the highest on record.

Enrollment at MU is up more than 800 over last year. We would chortle over a new industry hiring that many new people, and increasing MU enrollment is particularly lucrative, supporting as it does a valuable higher education infrastructure.

MU officials have done a good job developing and selling their product. Lucky us.
Providence Road crosswalk improves safety for pedestrians, slows motorists

Wednesday, September 3, 2014
BY Katie Johns

COLUMBIA — Young people are making more "safe crossings" using the zigzag crosswalk on Providence Road near Douglass High School, according to an MU study.

Motorists are also slowing down in the vicinity, the study found.

The three-year research study, conducted by MU, the city of Columbia and PedNet Coalition, shows better pedestrian safety and a decrease in traffic speed at the crosswalk. The study began in 2012 before the infrastructure changes occurred. Since the change in 2013, research has been collected each June.

Fourth Ward City Councilman Ian Thomas and MU associate professors Stephen Sayers and Sonja Wilhelm Stanis conducted the study.

Within a month of the project's completion in 2013, researchers found that 20 percent of crossings were "safe crossings," or crossings where pedestrians used the new crosswalk. They also found that while only 7.1 percent of youths had used the pedestrian bridge that the crosswalk replaced, 31.3 percent of them now use the crosswalk.

Researchers hope that if one kid sees another use the crosswalk, he or she will follow. Thomas said he hopes this number will get higher.

On the traffic side of things, the study found that driving behavior changed as well. The average traffic speed fell from 34.8 to 33.5 mph. There also was a marked reduction in the number of vehicles driving over the 35 mph speed limit.

"Cars traveled very fast along this street, sometimes up to 70 mph along that residential stretch," Sayers said. "This created lots of frustration for residents of the neighborhood who feared for their children and their own safety as well as motorists who had to dodge pedestrians."

Before the crosswalk, there was an overpass bridge that some pedestrians used. But the bridge was considered unsafe by some, and they crossed the street, dodging cars instead. It was demolished as part of the project.

"There were concerns about crime, as the bridge had high walls and poor lighting," Sayers said. "Also, it was not ADA compliant for people with disabilities. So, a signalized crosswalk with a
400-foot median would be a safer alternative, which could also have an effect on slowing traffic along that stretch."

While Providence Road was being observed, College Avenue was used as a control site in the study. It does not have a crosswalk, so it helped the researchers understand just how much impact a crosswalk can have. Wilhelm Stanis said there was an increase in speeding and crossing patterns didn't change.

"There is a need to better understand the impact on infrastructure changes on behaviors and, in particular, crosswalks for safe crossing behaviors," she said.

Supervising editor is Katherine Reed.

Nixon enlists health professionals on e-cigarettes

By DAVID A. LIEB

COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) — Gov. Jay Nixon enlisted the support of health care professionals Wednesday as he sought to persuade lawmakers to sustain his veto of legislation exempting electronic cigarettes from state tobacco taxes and regulations.

Legislators are to meet next week to consider overriding Nixon's veto. They had passed the bill overwhelmingly earlier this year, citing a provision that would prohibit e-cigarette sales to people younger than 18.

Nixon convened a panel of medical doctors and officials from the lung, heart and cancer associations at the University of Missouri's Ellis Fischel Cancer Center to highlight what they described as the dangers of electronic cigarettes. They all agreed that sales to minors should be banned, but said that could be accomplished by federal regulations and that the state exemption from tobacco taxes and regulations was inappropriate.

"We shouldn't, in this one fell swoop under the guise of saying we're protecting kids ... provide this blanket shield to any sort of proper regulation for these type of products," Nixon said.

Electronic cigarettes are battery-powered devices that vaporize nicotine, some coming in flavors like bubble gum that could be appealing to children. They've been sold in the U.S. since 2007 and have grown to a $2 billion annual market.
The federal Food and Drug Administration has proposed rules that would treat e-cigarettes as tobacco products, barring sales to minors and requiring warning labels. But it could take years before those rules are finalized, allowing youths to continue buying e-cigarettes in the meantime and potentially get hooked on nicotine, said state Sen. Jay Wasson, R-Nixa, who sponsored the state's legislation.

The legislation originally passed the Senate 27-4 and the House 127-19 — both well in excess of the two-thirds majority required to override vetoes during a Sept. 10 session.

Wasson said some of the support has since faded for the legislation because of Nixon's concerns, but he said he was still likely to attempt an override.

"The most important thing right now is to stop these young kids from buying them," Wasson said, "because they're kind of becoming a fad."

Wasson said he exempted e-cigarettes from tobacco taxes because of opposition by the state convenience store association and a fear that a tax could not pass the Republican-led Legislature.

Health professionals at Nixon's event said it makes sense to regulate e-cigarettes as tobacco products, because they contain nicotine and can be addictive just like regular cigarettes.

Dr. Lucas Buffaloe, an assistant professor of clinical family and community medicine at the university, said he sees a lot of patients who use e-cigarettes in hopes that will help them quit smoking or offer a safer alternative to regular cigarettes.

But "we don't have good evidence that these products help people to quit smoking, and we also don't know what the long-term health effects of these products are going to be," he said.

**COLUMBIA DAILY TRIBUNE**

**Governor talks e-cigarettes with health advocates ahead of veto session**

By Roger McKinney
Wednesday, September 3, 2014 at 5:13 pm Comments (1)

Gov. Jay Nixon appeared at Ellis Fischel Cancer Center on Wednesday accompanied by health advocates to bolster his argument for sustaining his veto of a bill dealing with e-cigarettes.
Nixon said Senate Bill 841 would jeopardize public health by exempting electronic cigarettes from existing laws, regulations and taxes that apply to traditional cigarettes. He said it began as a bill to prohibit minors from buying the e-cigarettes, an idea which he supports.

"We all agree that e-cigarette sales to minors should be prohibited," Nixon said, adding that "big tobacco" became involved along the line. The veto session begins next week and Nixon said there may be an attempt to override his veto.

Jeff Harris, Nixon's senior policy adviser, said legislators may not have been aware of the tax exemption for e-cigarettes when they voted for it.

"Now they have an opportunity to right a wrong," Harris said.

Nixon and others on the panel said the U.S. Food and Drug Administration also is working on regulations that would prohibit e-cigarette sales to minors.

Lucas Buffaloe, assistant professor of clinical family and community medicine at the University of Missouri School of Medicine, said e-cigarettes are marketed as a way to stop smoking, or a healthier alternative to traditional tobacco cigarettes. He said there's no evidence they do either.

"We don't know what the long-term health effects of these products are," Buffaloe said.

Ashleigh Johnson, chairwoman of the American Lung Association Leadership Council, said celebrities and TV ads are used to market e-cigarettes to young people.

Jace Smith, Missouri government relations director for the American Heart Association, said the nicotine in the e-cigarettes is a known health hazard.

"We know that nicotine does restrict blood flow and increase the risk of heart attack and stroke," she said.

Kevin Everett, professor in the MU School of Medicine, said users of e-cigarettes remain or become addicted to nicotine.

"I would be in favor of more comprehensive regulation" than is in the law that was vetoed, Everett said. That could include banning advertising for e-cigarettes.

Stacy Reliford, Missouri government relations director for the American Cancer Society, said the FDA regulations on e-cigarettes could be issued by the end of the year, with implementation next year. They could prohibit sales and free samples to minors and prohibit TV ads.

Nixon said he hopes legislators listen to the experts.

"It's a significant and real mistake," Nixon said of the bill.
Rep. Caleb Rowden, R-Columbia, sponsored the bill in the House. During debate he called it a "first step" that bans sales to minors but doesn't preclude future regulation.

Gov. Nixon defends veto of e-cigarette bill

Wednesday, September 3, 2014 | 9:27 p.m. CDT; updated 11:40 p.m. CDT, Wednesday, September 3, 2014

BY Sabrina Russello

COLUMBIA — Gov. Jay Nixon made his case against tax exemption for e-cigarettes and other alternative nicotine products Wednesday during a roundtable discussion with local health professionals at the Ellis Fischel Cancer Center in Columbia.

In July, Nixon vetoed Senate Bill 841, which would have kept such products from being taxed and regulated as tobacco products are, while at the same time banning their sale to minors.

The bill passed in the House 127 to 19 and in the Senate 27 to 4. Nixon's veto seems likely to be overridden when the General Assembly meets for its annual veto session next week.

Again and again, Gov. Nixon and other members of the roundtable emphasized that not enough is known about the health effects of e-cigarettes to be able to declare them safer than traditional tobacco products.

"The fact of the matter is with the long-term effects of e-cigarettes unknown, creating new loopholes for e-cigarettes would jeopardize public health, and quite frankly that's unacceptable," Nixon said.

Stacy Reliford, the state government relations director at the American Cancer Society and one of the members of the roundtable, warned that SB 841 sends the wrong message to the public about e-cigarettes.

She said that the bill "creates the illusion that the products are safer, without the scientific evidence to back it up."

The scientific evidence that does exist concerns Jace Smith, the government relations director at the American Heart Association.

"We know that nicotine does restrict blood flow and does increase your chance of heart disease and stroke, so we'd like to see these regulated," Smith said about the products covered by SB 841.
Another cause of concern for the members of the roundtable was the rapid increase in the marketing of e-cigarettes. Smith said that advertising for e-cigarettes and related products has grown by about 250 percent in the past two years.

**Dr. Lucas Buffaloe, an assistant professor of clinical family and community medicine at MU, worried that such marketing has made e-cigarettes more attractive to young people.**

"We're seeing more and more teenagers who are using these products," he said. "And electronic cigarettes are actually serving as a gateway to nicotine addiction."

E-cigarettes are battery-powered devices that resemble traditional tobacco cigarettes. They contain a liquid solution that produces a nicotine-infused vapor when heated.

Original versions of e-cigarettes were designed to resemble traditional cigarettes, but newer versions can look like a jump drive for a computer, pen or pencil. E-cigarettes can also have flavors such as bubble gum or Cap'n Crunch, said Ashleigh Johnson, chairwoman of the American Lung Association Leadership Council.

**Nick Kohlberg, an MU student and co-chairman of the Missouri Public Health Advocacy Coalition who attended the roundtable, hopes that legislators will reconsider their support for SB 841 before next week's vote on an override. He's not that optimistic, though.**

"The only thing I think that will possibly keep it from being overridden is if legislators have looked at the facts and read the bill more carefully," he said. "In my mind it’s not that promising that we will see the veto staying in effect."

Jeff Harris, senior policy adviser to Nixon, thinks that legislators meant well when they passed SB 841 but didn't fully appreciate at the time that it was "a wolf in sheep's clothing." He thinks members of the General Assembly face a clear decision during the veto session.

"A vote to override the governor's veto is a vote with manufacturers and sellers of e-cigarettes," he said. "A vote to sustain the governor's veto is a vote to protect and support the health of Missourians and Missouri families."

Most Missouri schools using own evaluation systems

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP) — Fewer than one-quarter of Missouri's 520 public school districts are using a new staff evaluation model developed by the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.
The department says half of the districts are using their own evaluation systems that align with the seven key evaluation principles developed by the agency. It says 28 percent are using an evaluation model developed by the University of Missouri and 22 percent are using the state's model.

One of the state's new guidelines calls for student performance measures to be used when evaluating staff.

A proposal on Missouri's November ballot would require student performance data to be the majority factor in staff evaluations that are used in determining which teachers to retain and how much to pay them.

NCAA issues handbook on handling sexual assaults

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — The NCAA says it has issued its member schools a new handbook that outlines the role an athletic department should play in dealing with sexual assaults.

The NCAA executive committee's statement at the beginning of the handbook states athletic departments must:

— Know and follow campus protocol for reporting incidents of sexual violence and report immediately any suspected sexual violence to appropriate campus offices for investigation and adjudication.

— Educate all student-athletes, coaches and staff about sexual violence prevention, intervention and response.

— Assure compliance with all federal and applicable state regulations.

— Cooperate with but not manage, direct, control or interfere with investigations into allegations of sexual-assault.

"It is imperative that all athletics department staff and all student-athletes understand the issues and how to respond as bystanders, find help and work with campus authorities," President Mark Emmett wrote in a letter to athletic administrators.
The Department of Education earlier this year released a list of 55 schools under investigation for possible violations of federal law over the handling of sexual violence and harassment complaints. The department did not specify whether any of those cases involve athletes.

Florida State was on the list. Seminoles quarterback James Winston was accused of a sexual assault by a female FSU student, but prosecutors in Florida decided there was not enough evidence to charge him.

The handbook is titled: "Addressing Sexual Assault and Interpersonal Violence: Athletics' Role in Support of Healthy and Safe Campuses."

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Why Campuses Can’t Talk About Alcohol When It Comes to Sexual Assault

By Robin Wilson

NO MENTION

At the beginning of every academic year, college freshmen are quickly introduced to two hallmarks of campus social life, drinking and hooking up.

But while statistics show that alcohol and sex can be a dangerous combination—at least half of students involved in alleged sexual assaults were drinking—campus officials are reluctant to put the two in the same sentence.

"The discussion of alcohol and sexual violence is the third rail of discourse," says Christopher P. Krebs, a senior social-science researcher for the company RTI International who has studied the effects of alcohol on sexual assault. "It’s something no one wants to go near."

Preventing sexual assault is at the top of the agenda on many campuses, but the people in charge of keeping students safe feel they can’t say much about alcohol, even though it is a common element in many incidents. In discussing the dangers of sexual
assault, administrators fear that if they counsel students to drink less, young women who get drunk and are assaulted will be blamed—and blame themselves. They may then not report the attacks to their colleges, and not get the help they need.

"The first things we hear are ‘What was she wearing?’ and ‘How much alcohol did she drink?’" says Darcie Folsom, director of sexual-violence prevention and advocacy at Connecticut College. "But those are not causing a sexual assault to happen. The perpetrator is the problem here." The director of wellness at the college already talks to students about high-risk drinking as part of a separate effort, Ms. Folsom says.

A former college president discovered last month just how volatile it can be to relate alcohol and sexual assault. Stephen Joel Trachtenberg, president emeritus of George Washington University, suggested as a guest on a National Public Radio show that college women could protect themselves by drinking less. The remarks caused an immediate uproar on GW’s campus and beyond.

"While we understand the desire to help women stay safe, this perspective puts the onus of stopping sexual assault on women," students in the Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration wrote in a letter to the former president. "It also does not work."

Mr. Trachtenberg says he was chastened by the negative reaction but surprised that counseling sobriety could be so controversial. "Someone who is drunk," he wrote in response to the students, "is more vulnerable to attack."

**Enforcing the Taboo**

In the past year, colleges have come under increasing pressure to properly deal with reports of sexual assault. They have a legal obligation to resolve such reports promptly and fairly, penalizing those found responsible. If the institutions mishandle the reports, they may be found in violation of the gender-equity law known as Title IX, according to the U.S. Department of Education.

As a result, many campuses are going on the offensive—offering educational programs, often online courses, that warn about the dangers of sexual assault and tell
students how to prevent it. Soon, under new federal regulations, such training will be mandatory.

But most programs don’t focus on students’ decisions, including how much to drink. One reason is that, for 15 years, the Department of Justice has run a grant program that serves as a major source of funds to colleges developing resources for sexual-assault prevention. Campus efforts considered "out of scope" for the grants include programs that "focus primarily on alcohol and substance abuse," the grant program says online. It points administrators away from an emphasis on "changing victim behavior."

Kathleen A. Bogle learned that alcohol could be off limits when she tried to deliver a talk several years ago called "Hooking Up, Alcohol, and Sexual Assault: Understanding the Connections and Reducing the Problem." It was for a meeting sponsored by the Justice Department’s Office on Violence Against Women, and federal officials asked Ms. Bogle, an associate professor of sociology and criminal justice at La Salle University, to remove the word "alcohol" from the title. Focusing on how much students drink, they said, leads to blaming victims.

"This starts to censor how we can talk about the issue," says Ms. Bogle. "I don’t think you are doing young women any favors by saying, We’re not going to tell you that this happens—and be careful about it."

Most sexual assaults happen after women voluntarily consume alcohol; relatively few occur after they have been given alcohol or drugs without their knowledge, according to an article in the Journal of American College Health in 2009 by Mr. Krebs and other researchers. Yet sexual-assault-prevention programs, it says, "seldom emphasize the important link between women’s use of substances … and becoming a victim of sexual assault."

But some form of that message could help, Antonia Abbey, a professor of social psychology at Wayne State University who studies violence against women, has argued. "The fact that women’s alcohol consumption may increase their likelihood of experiencing sexual assault does not make them responsible for the man’s behavior," she wrote in an article in 2002 in the Journal of Studies on Alcohol. "Being
intoxicated allows women to let down their guard and focus on their desire to have fun and be liked rather than on their personal safety," she wrote. "Such information may empower women when used in prevention programs."

On most campuses, however, education about sexual violence does not center on how students can lower their risk of assault by changing their own behavior. "What we steer our campuses away from is anything that says someone experienced gender violence because they had been drinking," says Joan Masters, coordinator of a statewide coalition of colleges in Missouri called Partners in Prevention. "Even if a student is sitting in a residence-hall room, gender violence can happen to them."

Instead, many campus programs focus on "bystander intervention," or teaching students how they can help their friends stay safe at parties and in other situations. It’s an easier message for students to hear, say campus administrators, and doesn’t result in blaming those who get drunk and are assaulted.

"They are taught to notice when something might be harmful to their friends and distract someone and get them away," says Ms. Masters. "Part of the conversation is ‘We need to keep our friends safe,’ and by doing that, we also learn how to keep ourselves safe."

The importance of gaining consent in sexual encounters is another point campus programs stress. "As far as assault prevention, we want to think about understanding what consent is, and that a person has the right to deny consent in a situation," says Connie J. Kirkland, manager of the sexual-assault services program at Northern Virginia Community College. "If somebody pushes the limits, that is the time to get out of Dodge or ask for help."

When campus officials do warn students about the role of alcohol in sexual assault, they frequently describe how a perpetrator may use it to wheedle consent out of a victim, or to get her too drunk to defend herself.

"Sexual predators weaponize alcohol," explains Peter F. Lake, director of the Center for Excellence in Higher Education Law and Policy at Stetson University. "Your
typical sexual predator will stage an attack and place alcohol where it’s heavily camouflaged, in sweet drinks."

‘Self-Inflicted’ Fear
While administrators see it as their job to help shape students’ social behavior, undergraduates are hardly a blank slate when they come to college. Most have already absorbed messages about alcohol and sex—from parents, high-school health teachers, friends, and the media.

Ayushi Roy, who graduated in May from Columbia University, says her parents warned her before her freshman year to be careful about drinking—and she was. "I was a very square, obedient child," she says. "I went from a California suburb to the middle of New York City. I was hyper-aware of my environment and very cautious."

But she grew to resent feeling as if she had to monitor her behavior because of what others might do to her, says Ms. Roy, a volunteer for Know Your IX, a network of self-identified survivors and allies. "The cost of any form of self-policing—not walking alone in the dark, watching what you drink and what you wear—is that you live under a self-inflicted form of fear," she says. "You are living in this fear that drinking or letting yourself go is a bad thing."

Her friend and classmate Marybeth Seitz-Brown agrees. "All of this sends the message that it’s the responsibility of women not to get raped," she says, "rather than the responsibility of everyone not to hurt other people."

But some students are willingly vigilant. Angela Acosta, who graduated in May from George Mason University, says she was careful "never to go to the extreme that I couldn’t talk, walk, or do anything" when it came to drinking. "My parents made sure I knew my limits," she says, "and how important that was. They said, ‘You will lose control over yourself, and you need to keep yourself safe, especially if you are in an environment you aren’t familiar with.’"

That’s just good advice, says Caroline Kitchens, a 2012 graduate of Duke University who now writes about sexual assault as a senior research associate at the American
Enterprise Institute. "In a perfect world, women would be able to do whatever they want," she says. But the world isn’t perfect. "There are always evil people out there, people who want to take advantage of women," she says. "If they exist, we have to practice some common-sense risk reduction."

It’s too bad, she says, campuses aren’t delivering that message.