UM System allocates $20.6 million in strategic funding dollars

University administrators allocated $20.6 million in strategic funding late last month that the four campuses can now use to support the missions their administrators outlined in the most recent versions of their strategic plans.

Strategic funding has been a staple of UM System President Tim Wolfe’s few years here so far. With funding based on the short and long-term goals outlined in the campus’ strategic plans, Wolfe and his staff have the chance to keep the administrators accountable.

The allocation from the UM System came a few weeks after Gov. Jay Nixon released $43.4 million in performance-based funding back to Missouri’s higher education institutions. Of that amount, about $21 million went to the UM System.

Here is a quick breakdown of how the $19.3 million was divvied out:

- $8 million to MU to recruit 20 new faculty members in certain disciplines during the next four years.
- $4.5 million to the Missouri University of Science and Technology to recruit doctoral students through stipends and fellowships, as well as faculty hires in S&T’s four signature research areas.
- $1.4 million to the Kansas City campus for need-based scholarships, online course development, a clinical and translational medicine research center and community college transfers.
- $1.5 million to the St. Louis campus for recruitment and retention scholarships.

You’ll see in the attached spreadsheet that some of those dollars are part of a one-time allocation.

Administrators also provided tuition offset awards to the four campuses with the strategic funds, totaling about $3.6 million. The breakdown for that is also in the attached spreadsheet.

Wolfe will also be dividing up and additional $2.2 million to the campuses for Title IX initiatives, spokesman John Fougere said in an email.
Local agencies coordinate Ebola plans

Event is held to reassure public.

By Jodie Jackson Jr.

Tuesday, October 21, 2014 at 12:15 pm

Public health and emergency management agencies began working together two weeks ago to coordinate plans and potential response to Ebola “in the unlikely event” that a case or outbreak of the disease occurs in Columbia.

Several representatives of emergency management and health organizations, in addition to Columbia Public Schools, presented a 20-minute news briefing Tuesday morning about response plans and preparedness for an Ebola event.

Andrea Waner, public information officer for the Columbia/Boone County Department of Public Health and Human Services, which hosted the news briefing, opened the event by saying that the risk of Ebola spreading to Columbia and Boone County was “very low.”

“We want to reassure the public that while the risk of Ebola in our area is very low, we are prepared to act appropriately should a positive case occur,” Waner said. She closed the news conference by calling on the public to protect community health with good hand-washing habits “and, most important, please do not spread rumors.”

Waner said a rumor circulating in the past 24 hours about an Ebola patient from Springfield coming to University Hospital in Columbia was “completely false.”

Scott Clardy, assistant director of the city/county health department, said unconfirmed reports like that tend to “feed into some of this hysteria” that has resulted in the closure of schools or businesses in other parts of the country.

He said the Columbia/Boone County response to Ebola should help avoid some of those “extreme reactions.”

“Let’s be reasonable about what we do here and not play into the fear-mongering,” Clardy said.

Columbia Fire Department Battalion Chief John Metz said his department — along with the Boone County Fire Protection District, Southern Boone Fire Protection District and Columbia
Regional Airport public safety office — are participating in joint Ebola-related training involving the correct way to put on and take off protective clothing, and transportation and decontamination practices. He said the training will continue into next week.

Gale Blomenkamp, division chief for the Boone County Fire Protection District, said working collectively will help create emergency response plans that are similar.

He said local emergency responders — firefighters, emergency medical technicians and ambulance crews — work together and face “everyday illnesses,” including influenza, which killed 52,000 people nationwide last year.

Stevan Whitt, chief medical officer for the University of Missouri Health System, said University Hospital is prepared to accept and treat someone with Ebola.

“We take care of serious, life-threatening illnesses all the time,” Whitt said.

University officials also responded to questions about students and faculty who are either from or traveling to any of the West African regions where Ebola outbreaks are rampant.

“We have no students that are here from that area” and no students traveling to the area, said Mary Jo Banken, executive director of the MU News Bureau. “As far as we know, right now we don’t have any faculty that is over there.”

The university’s international center keeps track of students who are studying abroad or coming from outside the country. Banken said the university follows guidelines for travel established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The Ebola issue has continued to develop as the virus has spread to a handful of other countries. Last week, two health care workers at a Dallas hospital where an Ebola patient died were isolated and began treatment after being infected with the virus.

Ebola is believed to spread through direct contact with bodily fluids.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Columbia at 'very low' risk of Ebola outbreak, health officials say

COLUMBIA — The risk for an Ebola outbreak in Columbia is very low, city representatives agreed Tuesday, and city and county agencies are coordinating their preparedness in the event someone is infected locally.
The Columbia/Boone County Department of Public Health and Human Services brought together officials from health, protection and public agencies to discuss Ebola preparedness and response at a news conference.

"We want to communicate and reassure the public that while the risk of Ebola in our area is very low, we are prepared to act appropriately should a positive case occur," said Andrea Waner, public information officer for the Health Department.

Waner said the agencies represented at the news conference have been working together to prepare for whatever situations might arise.

Panelists included Michelle Baumstark of Columbia Public Schools, Gale Blomenkamp of Boone County Fire Protection District, Scott Clardy of Columbia/Boone County Department of Public Health and Human Services, John Metz of Columbia Fire Department, Martina Pounds of Columbia/Boone County Office of Emergency Management, Brian Weimer of MU Police Department and Stevan Whitt of MU Health Care.

"We have been working together for about two weeks collectively in meetings, putting together our plans and reassuring each other that yes, we do have plans in place, and what those plans are," Blomenkamp said.

Metz said that in the last week of September, the Fire Department conducted a review of infectious diseases, including Ebola, and shared information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention — such as wearing the appropriate personal protective equipment — to all personnel.

He said that this week, the Boone County Fire Protection District, the Southern Boone County Fire Protection District, the Columbia Fire Department and the Columbia Regional Airport public safety office are training on Ebola-related topics, including operational guidelines, transportation protocols and decontamination techniques.

Metz said the best way for the public to get information on Ebola in the area is from local agencies. The Health Department has a Web page dedicated to Ebola-related information and links to the CDC website.

Whitt, chief medical officer for MU Health Care, said the risk of an Ebola outbreak in this area is low for two main reasons: because there is not a reservoir, such as a jungle, where the disease lives outside of humans, as is the case in places such as West Africa; and because infection control practices in the U.S. are different in places such as West Africa, where there is less trust in Western medicine.

Waner encouraged the public to continue using good health care practices such as hand-washing. "Most importantly, please do not spread rumors," she said.
Candlelight vigil scheduled in memory of MU student

Tuesday, October 21, 2014 at 9:55 am

The University of Missouri’s Sigma Pi fraternity is hosting a candlelight vigil Tuesday night in memory of Christopher Nicklow, 20, a member of the organization who was found unresponsive and pronounced dead at a hospital Sunday night.

The vigil will be at 10 p.m. at the Sigma Pi chapter house, 808 S. Providence Road, and is open to the public.

“The men of Sigma Pi Fraternity are deeply saddened by the loss of our brother and friend, Chris Nicklow,” a statement from the fraternity said. “Chris was an exemplary student and model brother who will be sorely missed by our Fraternity, friends, family, and the University of Missouri. We appreciate the outpouring of support we have received from the Greek community during this troubling time.”

Nicklow is listed in the University of Missouri directory as a sophomore studying food science and nutrition.

Columbia police said Monday that no foul play is suspected in Nicklow’s death. Stacey Huck of the Boone County Medical Examiner’s Office said preliminary autopsy results point to natural causes.

Nicklow is the second MU fraternity member to be found dead in less than a month. Cale Boedeker, an Alpha Gamma Rho member, was found dead at his fraternity house on Sept. 29. Huck said ketoacidosis, a condition related to Boedeker’s diabetes, caused his death.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

MU student who died Sunday remembered at candlelight vigil

COLUMBIA — Sounds of grief mixed with the music of the guitars and drum.
More than 200 people listened Thursday night on the Sigma Pi fraternity house lawn as four members sang a song in remembrance of fraternity brother Chris Nicklow, who died Sunday. The song was "Rivers and Roads" by the Head and the Heart.

Nicklow, 20, from Medina, Minnesota, died unexpectedly Sunday night.

Friends who spoke at the candlelight vigil described Nicklow as a nature lover who was goofy and carefree.

"What happened is truly a tragedy," said Chris Coco, a close friend and member of Sigma Pi. "The pain of his absence can't really be described in words. I know he was looking over all of us with that stupid Minnesotan grin. You will be missed and never forgotten. I love you, man."

Sigma Pi President Ben Baker, along with members of the fraternity, thanked everyone for their support. Baker led the crowd in a prayer. At the end of the vigil, all of the Sigma Pi brothers recited the fraternity's creed.

Nicklow was a sophomore studying food science and nutrition, according to MU Directories.

Nicklow was found unresponsive Sunday evening at a friend's house northeast of campus. He was taken to a local hospital, where he was later pronounced dead.

An investigator with the Boone County Medical Examiner's office said Tuesday afternoon that the autopsy for Chris Nicklow has been completed, but the cause of death has not been determined.

"We are under the impression (the cause of death) is natural causes, but we cannot confirm or deny until the results of the toxicology test," Boone County Medical Examiner investigator Stacey Huck said.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

2014 MU Homecoming blood drive collects 5,738 pints of blood

Tuesday, October 21, 2014 | 3:35 p.m. CDT; updated 6:45 a.m. CDT, Wednesday, October 22, 2014

BY Sabrina Russello

COLUMBIA — The 2014 MU Homecoming blood drive collected 5,738 pints of blood, about 490 pints over the goal, Daphne Mathew, communications director of the American Red Cross, said.
The 29th annual MU Homecoming blood drive collected blood from students, alumni and community members. The drive, hosted by the Mizzou Alumni Association, was held at Hearnes Center Fieldhouse.

Various satellite locations also collected blood in support of the MU Homecoming blood drive and the American Red Cross Missouri-Illinois Blood Services Region. These locations in Missouri included Kansas City, St. Louis and Springfield, according to donateblood.com.

Numbers for these satellite locations are still being calculated, Mathew said.

Once these numbers are included, it is expected that the total for this year's blood drive will be more than 6,000 pints, according to a news release. Last year, MU's Homecoming blood drive and satellite drives collected 6,237 pints of blood, Mathews said.

Since 1985, the MU Homecoming blood drive has cumulatively collected more than 100,000 pints of blood, according to the release.

Each blood donation has the potential to save up to three lives, according to the American Red Cross's website. By that calculation this year's drives could save more than 17,000 lives.

For more information or to make an appointment, go to redcrossblood.org or call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767).

Lafferre renovation to start early 2015

MU still has three buildings that have ranked 0.5 or higher on the FCNI that need funding to renovate.

In one hallway of Lafferre Hall, 14 buckets catch the water dripping from the leaking roof after a thunderstorm. Towels are pressed against the base of the walls to soak up water on the floor. Sheets of plastic are stretched over research equipment to funnel rainwater into Tupperware containers. Pieces of the rotted ceiling regularly collapse in peoples’ offices.

But now, the building’s future is looking less stormy. Gov. Jay Nixon voted Oct. 16 to issue $38.5 million toward renovating Lafferre, according to a news release from his office.

The renovations will repair sections of the building that were built in 1935 and 1944, and are expected to add 20,000 square feet for research space.

According to the release, renovations are expected to begin in early 2015 and will be completed by December 2016. The building is expected to reopen for the spring 2017 semester.
“We are extremely grateful to the governor and the state legislature for supporting the bonding and capital improvement bills,” Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin said in the release. “The renovations made possible with these bonds will provide our students access to state-of-the-art engineering facilities and enhance our researchers’ capabilities to conduct groundbreaking research, leading to innovation and economic growth for the state.”

Lafferre received a 0.91 rating on the Facilities Conditions Needs Index earlier this year, which means that 91 percent of the building needs to be updated.

Facilities inspections were conducted on all university-owned or leased buildings in the spring following the Feb. 22 structural collapse at University Village, which killed a Columbia firefighter.

“We can’t prepare our students for the jobs of the next century in facilities designed in the last century,” Nixon said in a news release. “That’s why this project is so important, not only to enhance the educational experience of students here at MU, but also to strengthen our state’s ability to compete and create jobs in the global economy.”

Marty Walker, director of administrative services in the College of Engineering, said the renovations will reduce stress among faculty and students who work in Lafferre.

“It causes a lot of consternation with the students because whenever it rains you don’t know what you’re going to find: It’s like playing the lottery,” Walker said. “People have to take unusual measures to make sure their work is usable when they return to their desk the day after a rainfall.”

He said a patchy roof is just one of the building’s many issues. Lafferre was built on a slope, so the floors aren’t level and don’t connect normally. There are also only two elevators on opposite sides of the building.

“It makes it very difficult because you have to give yourself plenty of extra time to maneuver through the building,” Walker said.

He said low-hanging, exposed pipes make walking through the halls difficult for taller individuals, and many of these pipes are rusted and leak regularly.

In the materials lab, the wall is pulling back and buckling in, Walker said. The seals on many double-pane windows are broken, which makes them foggy and leaky.

“There are areas in hallways that are cut off, rooms with no doors, leaks in the roof … it’s like a cage,” MU spokesman Christian Basi said. “It’s not a great environment right now. The entire building has significant issues.”

Maintenance workers are part of a “Band-Aid squad” called in nearly every time it rains to try and patch leaks in the roof where they can, Walker said.
“There are so many leaks that you Band-Aid one up and you have two more,” he said.

Members of the Missouri Students Association and the Associated Students of the University of Missouri traveled to Jefferson City last year to rally for renovation funding, MSA Senate Speaker Ben Bolin said.

“One of the biggest reasons we (rallied) is because the lack of a roof and huge leaks prevent higher education learning” he said. “We could teach in a cardboard box here, but it wouldn’t be nearly as effective.”

ASUM President Trey Sprick said so many facility needs could also hurt the university’s ability recruit “high-quality students interested in the STEM fields.”

But Lafferre isn’t the only building that needs renovations.

Currently, MU hasn’t received funding for McKee Gymnasium, Waters Hall and Mumford Hall, Basi said. These buildings have ranked 0.8, 0.8 and 0.5 on the FCNI, and are expected to cost $15 million, $22 million and $24 million to renovate, respectively.

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Parks to offer safe viewing of solar eclipse

COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) — Parks and observatories in Missouri are offering the public a chance to safely view the final solar eclipse of the year.

The moon will move in front of the sun from about 4:40-6 p.m. Thursday. Regular sunglasses won’t fully protect eyes from damage, so anyone viewing the eclipse is urged to wear special filtered glasses.

In eastern Missouri, the Wentzville parks department will hand out 500 eclipse shades for viewing at Broemmelsiek (BRAW'-muhl-sihk) Park.

Laws Observatory at the University of Missouri in Columbia is hosting a public viewing starting at 4:40 p.m. The observatory has two filtered telescopes and will also provide eclipse glasses.

Thursday's eclipse will be partial rather than full, with maximum coverage occurring around 5:45 p.m.
Jump in Federal Probes for Mishandling Sex Assaults

October 21, 2014

NO MU MENTION

The number of federal investigations into colleges' handling of sexual assault on their campuses has jumped 50 percent in the past six months, according to government data provided to The Washington Post.

The U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights is now working on 89 active cases at 85 colleges and universities, The Post reports. Federal investigators are looking to see whether those institutions violated the federal anti-discrimination law known as Title IX in handling reports of sexual violence.

When the Obama administration in May first began disclosing the names of colleges under investigation, there were 59 cases pending at 55 colleges.

For Colleges, Student-Privacy Law Can Be an Obligation and a Shield

October 22, 2014 By Eric Kelderman

NO MU MENTION

When Treon Harris, the starting quarterback for the University of Florida’s football team, was accused of sexual assault this month, the university did something unusual: It announced the accusation publicly the very next day.
Colleges are not known for being open to sharing information about sexual assaults or anything else involving the bad behavior of students. Such matters, they often say, are cloaked by a federal law—the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, which prohibits educational institutions from releasing "education records" that reveal the identity of an individual student.

The university may have felt that it had few other options at the time: Law-enforcement records from the campus police are among the few clear exceptions to the federal privacy statute, which is commonly known as Ferpa.

Otherwise, that statute is very broad, and it comes with relatively little guidance from the U.S. Department of Education.

"The term ‘education record’ applies to much more than just academic records such as grades. It encompasses nearly everything on campus," says Steven J. McDonald, general counsel at the Rhode Island School of Design, who has written often on the topic.

The broad nature of the law, however, has created a lot of misunderstanding among higher-education leaders, who may try to use it to block access to not only information about incidents of sexual violence, but also cases of academic fraud, notes from a student-government meeting, and even student emails about a university's fight song.

In the context of sexual assaults, the use of the privacy law has angered activists who blame colleges for wielding Ferpa like an all-purpose shield against outside inquiry, even when a student’s privacy is not at risk."

**Ferpa Follies**

Journalists and other advocates for more transparency in higher education have long clashed with college lawyers over what is and isn’t covered by the privacy law.
Many colleges use it tactically to hide embarrassing information from the public or to avoid accountability, says Welch Suggs, an associate professor of journalism at the University of Georgia. (Mr. Suggs is also a former reporter for The Chronicle.)

"When you start talking about sexual assaults, and how badly some of them have been handled, you might understand why universities would not want them discussed publicly," he says.

Questionable citations of Ferpa go beyond the specifics of sexual-assault accusations. The Student Press Law Center maintains a blog that fact-checks how some colleges use, or abuse, the privacy law. For example, California’s College of the Desert denied news-media requests to reveal whether it had expelled a student who pleaded guilty in state court to two counts of sexual battery. "All of our students’ privacy rights continue to be protected by Ferpa," explained a college official. The law center rated that response as an incorrect application of the law, with the information about the student’s status "not protected by Ferpa at all."

One case that the law center rated "a pretty legitimate use of Ferpa" involved allegations of academic fraud against a football player at the University of Notre Dame. The player’s father complained that the university had not given him enough information about the situation.

In that case, the son would have to give his consent for the university to release the information, the law center concluded.

There’s also debate about the penalties colleges face if they run afoul of Ferpa. Often higher-education officials warn that violating the federal law will result in their loss of federal financial aid.

But even if the Department of Education determines that a college has violated Ferpa, there are virtually no consequences, says Frank D. LoMonte, executive director of the Student Press Law Center, which advocates for a narrower definition of what is
covered by the law. "Zero times in the history of Ferpa," he says, "has a college been penalized for violating the law."

"If the department found a violation, they would tell the college to stop doing that," Mr. LoMonte says. The only way a college might actually be punished is if it wrote back to the department and said "go to hell," he says.

Mr. McDonald, the Rhode Island School of Design lawyer, disputed that the law is toothless. While the ultimate penalty has never been applied, he says, the threat of it is enough to force voluntary compliance.

The Student Press Law Center's real complaint is that "it doesn't like the scope of Ferpa," Mr. McDonald says, "but that’s a policy issue that should be addressed to Congress."

Delayed Responses
You don’t have to look very hard to find examples of colleges that responded very differently from the University of Florida when their athletes were charged with sexual assaults. In March three basketball players at the University of Oregon were accused of sexually assaulting a victim after a game

The police department in Eugene, Ore., investigated the accusations, and the university’s police department and administration were notified of the alleged assaults. But for two months the university made no public statements and even allowed the athletes to continue playing on the team.

In May the university finally acknowledged that the players had been accused of sexual assault and suspended them from the team—nearly a month after the local district attorney announced that he had insufficient evidence to prove the charges beyond a reasonable doubt and therefore would not prosecute the case. In June all three were expelled from the university.
But even with a public police report on the case, the university’s president at the time, Michael R. Gottfredson, initially declined to discuss Oregon’s response to the accusations. He said in a written statement that "federal laws that protect the privacy of all students preclude the university from commenting about students."

Many questions also remain about the case involving Florida State University’s star quarterback, Jameis Winston, who was accused of a sexual assault in December 2012. Although Florida State’s police force responded to the incident, the university took no disciplinary action and did not even acknowledge the alleged assault until the Tampa Bay Times received a copy of the incident report from the Tallahassee Police Department, in November 2013.

It’s not clear whether either Oregon or Florida State has violated the federal privacy law.

Incident reports from campus police officers are exempted from the law’s protections. But a record of a police action that is given to a campus administrator for disciplinary action against a student would fall under Ferpa’s restrictions, Mr. McDonald says. If that student were found to have committed an act of violence under the college’s disciplinary process, that information would then be open to the public, he says.

The record of an external police force, such as an arrest by a local police officer, would be open to the public because it was not created by the college. That same record, however, could not be revealed by campus officials after they obtained it, Mr. McDonald says.

**Under Pressure**

Florida chose to provide limited information on Mr. Harris’s case, which was later dismissed when the accuser recanted her accusation. But the university has not disclosed whether it has completed its own investigation or conducted disciplinary procedures against Mr. Harris.
The question now is whether the university’s response will become the new norm or remain an exception. Will pressure from activists, the news media, and the Education Department push other colleges to cast aside concerns about Ferpa and be more transparent in disclosing cases of sexual assault?

There is at least some evidence that colleges are becoming more forthcoming, at least in cases involving high-profile students such as Mr. Harris. The University of Kentucky recently took the same approach when one of its football players was accused of committing a sexual assault.

"The legal charges filed in this case as well as the disciplinary action taken by the football team were both public and happened at about the same time," says Jay Blanton, a spokesman for the university, by email.

But even with increased pressure from the federal government, there is little chance that colleges will feel the need to be more open about accusations against less-well-known students, says Mr. LoMonte of the Student Press Law Center.

"You wouldn't have seen such intense media pressure on a university to disclose details of a case against a member of the chess team," he says.

Forcing colleges to be more open in how they deal with sexual violence would require policy changes outside of Ferpa, says Michele Landis Dauber, a professor of law at Stanford University, because most incidents of sexual assault on campuses are never reported to the police and don’t involve prominent athletes.

While colleges are required to report the number of rapes that occur on the campus, they should also be required to report the outcome of disciplinary actions concerning those incidents, she says.

But the recent examples at the Universities of Florida and of Kentucky are likely to remain exceptions, says Ms. Dauber, who led Stanford’s two-year effort to revise its sexual-assault policies beginning in 2011.
"I’m skeptical," she says, "how much of this is about protecting women versus protecting the money stream from big-time athletics."

What’s a university to do?
by Tom George

NO MU MENTION

Some people rush in. Others actively step back — to assess, plan and think systemically. There has been no shortage of opinions on how universities should best address the issues raised by both the death of Michael Brown in Ferguson and the responses that have engulfed the St. Louis region.

Since the beginning of the crisis, University of Missouri-St. Louis faculty, staff, students and alumni have both rushed in and begun planning for change — demonstrating the complex role a university plays within a metropolitan community.

UMSL’s faculty, as well as those at other area universities, has been called upon to help the world understand seemingly incongruous, but ultimately intertwined, events surrounding difficult issues: racism, poverty, chronic unemployment, educational deficiencies, economic stagnation, police tactics, political participation and free speech, among many others.

Since the tragedy of Aug. 9, UMSL’s economists, criminologists and public policy, social work, psychology, counseling, education and business authorities have been deeply engaged. From the public perspective, they have served as cultural translators to tens, if not hundreds, of millions of readers and viewers of media as diverse as the BBC, Al-Jazeera, CNN, FOX, NPR and this very newspaper.

Our faculty also has organized workshops, symposia and intervention strategies, creating the initial foundation of activities to address the long-term issues. While the UMSL faculty has always been uniquely engaged in the community, these events have added urgency and focus.

But UMSL’s role hasn’t been limited to intellectual interpretation. Our students, faculty, staff and alumni have been cleaning up streets, organizing food drives, supporting Ferguson-area businesses and providing counseling services to residents, teachers, students and safety workers. I am proud of the way in which all of these individuals have demonstrated their personal commitment to the community.
Our people also are involved in initiatives related to community health, law enforcement, economic development and neighborhood renewal. They have been in discussions with other institutions and companies to expand these efforts or to launch new programs impacting Ferguson and neighboring communities.

As UMSL is in north St. Louis County, the campus, in and of itself, serves as a major catalyst to add stability to the community. That is why we are investing more than $100 million to replace aging buildings. And UMSL is working with the Missouri Department of Transportation to redevelop a large section of Natural Bridge Road, replacing a decaying urban landscape with innovative and attractive streetscape as part of the renowned “Great Streets Project.” This is just the type of activity that can make a difference in the community. We are proud of our status as an anchor institution in North County.

Recruiting and retaining a diverse student body from the St. Louis region is, of course, the most important way in which UMSL positively affects the social well-being and economy of our community. This requires a concerted effort to better prepare students in disadvantaged school districts for college. And we need to maintain superior academic programs and an environment of success and inclusion once the students get here.

Our friends at Emerson understand the magnitude and importance of this role in regional betterment and acknowledged it in announcing their “Ferguson Forward” initiative.

The $4.4 million, multifaceted plan outlined last month by CEO David Farr will broaden the employment and education opportunities for residents of Ferguson and nearby communities. Calling UMSL “a crucial partner,” Farr said the initiative included $1.5 million to establish the Emerson Community Scholarship Program on our campus.

**The University of Missouri System and UMSL will add $500,000 to match Emerson’s generous donation and endorsement. We are calling this the North County Scholarship Program, and it will be geared toward students in several North County school districts.**

During my 11 years as chancellor, I have found St. Louis to be a place with tremendous strengths. I also have found that St. Louis — like most communities — has issues that weaken and threaten it.

Working together, I am convinced that St. Louis can move forward to better ensure opportunities for success and inclusion for all of its citizens. I certainly pledge our resources to that end.

*Tom George is chancellor of the University of Missouri–St. Louis.*