Fourth MU provost candidate to visit

By Ashley Jost

Saturday, November 8, 2014 at 12:00 am

The fourth and final candidate vying to be the University of Missouri’s chief academic officer is coming to campus next week.

Garnett Stokes, Florida State University provost, will talk about her educational and professional background before fielding questions from faculty, staff and students at 4 p.m Monday in Room 112 of LeFevre Hall, according to a campus-wide email from the search committee.

Stokes has been the FSU provost since 2011. She acted as the university’s interim president after Eric Barron became president of Penn State University earlier this year. Stokes was one of several candidates competing for the FSU presidency, along with another MU provost candidate, Michele Wheatly. Neither was chosen.

Stokes is the third female candidate for the provost position. Faculty Council Chairman Craig Roberts said last week many faculty members asked the provost search committee to be diverse in its selections.

Before Florida State, Stokes was dean of the University of Georgia College of Arts and Sciences for seven years. The University of Georgia is where she gained tenure before moving up the ranks, including several years as the psychology department head.

The majority of top MU administrators have backgrounds in science-related fields. Stokes is the first candidate with a background in a social science. She received her master’s degree and doctorate at the University of Georgia. Her master’s is in measurement and human differences, and her doctorate is in industrial/organizational psychology, according to her curriculum vitae. Her undergraduate degree is in psychology from Carson-Newman College in Tennessee.

MU spokeswoman Mary Jo Banken said in an email that Stokes is the final provost candidate to be announced. Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin will choose the new provost among the four candidates sometime in the next few weeks. He has said he would like the new provost to be on campus as early as possible for the spring semester.
Fourth MU provost candidate to speak in forum Monday

Friday, November 7, 2014 | 6:04 p.m. CST

BY MICHAEL ALVEY

COLUMBIA — Garnett Stokes, provost and executive vice chancellor for academic affairs at Florida State University, will be the fourth MU provost candidate to participate in a public forum on campus.

Students, faculty and staff are welcome to attend the discussion and ask the candidate questions, according to an email from the provost search committee. The forum is scheduled for 4 p.m. Monday in Room 112, Lefevre Hall.

Along with serving as the provost at Florida State since 2011, Stokes has been the interim president of the university since March 7. However, on Thursday, two days after he was re-elected to the Florida Senate, John Thrasher was confirmed as Florida State's next president.

At Florida State, Stokes has focused on several initiatives such as faculty advancement and development; student graduate success; university-wide hiring initiatives, including the development of an entrepreneur-in-residence program for each college; and the establishment of an Office of Postdoctoral Affairs, according to her bio page.

According to her resume, Stokes, 58, earned a bachelor's degree in psychology in 1977 from Carson-Newman College in Tennessee; a master's degree in measurement and human differences from the University of Georgia in 1980; and doctorate from Georgia in industrial/organizational psychology in 1982.

Stokes became an assistant professor in the department of psychology at the University of Georgia in 1985 and held various positions throughout her more than 25 years there, including professor, head of the Department of Psychology and, from 2004 to 2011, dean of the Franklin College of Arts and Sciences.
Stokes' resume also notes that she is a fellow for the Association of Psychological Science, the American Psychological Association and the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology.

The other three provost candidates who have visited MU for interviews are Michele Wheatly, former provost of West Virginia University; John Wiencek, interim provost at Virginia Commonwealth University; and Nancy Brickhouse, deputy provost for the University of Delaware.

Brian Foster retired after eight years as MU provost in December 2013. Since then, the university hired a search firm, Isaacson, Miller, to help create a position profile for the provost.

Deputy Provost Kenneth Dean has been serving as interim provost. Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin will make the final decision about who to hire as MU’s next chief academic officer. On Friday, MU spokesman Christian Basi said the chancellor has indicated he would like to hire a new provost by early next semester.

Supervising editor is Elizabeth Brixey.

Faculty Council discusses ‘a new day’ for Title IX relations

The council discussed the complexities of sexual misconduct cases involving tenured faculty, and the search for a new Title IX administrator.

Sexual violence on campus — and how faculty might respond to it — was the recurring topic during Thursday’s Faculty Council meeting.

“This is a very important issue,” said nursing professor Rebecca Johnson, who ran the meeting in place of council chairman Craig Roberts. “It’s a new day for us, for sharing our views.”
Dennis Miller, professor of psychological sciences and a faculty representative to the Intercampus Faculty Council, discussed how the university might treat cases of sexual misconduct allegations involving faculty.

**Miller said UM System President Tim Wolfe’s overhaul of Title IX relations earlier this year has intentionally not yet changed much about how faculty misconduct is handled to allow IFC to “be the ones who are actively creating the procedures and policies for faculty in that realm.”**

Miller said tenure provides a unique challenge when dealing with allegations of sexual misconduct by faculty.

“What if it’s a tenured faculty member?” he said. “How do we balance the needs of a person who accuses that tenured faculty member of misconduct, to have that be resolved quickly as Title IX requires, versus the protection of tenure?”

William Wiebold, professor of plant sciences and Fiscal Affairs Committee chairman, expressed concern that the faculty misconduct policy might treat tenure-track and non-tenure track faculty unequally.

“A truly bad person ought not to be protected by tenure, and a person that isn’t bad ought to have some protection, even if they’re not on tenure track,” he said.

John Gahl, professor of electrical and computer engineering, also asked whether a review board composed of faculty members might not be impartial when dealing with misconduct allegations involving other faculty.

“I’m a student,” Gahl hypothesized to the council. “I accuse this faculty member of harassment, and the university says, ‘Hey, we’re going to go get a group of the faculty member’s friends to decide whether or not they were really harassing you.’”

Johnson responded that the Title IX policy overhaul aims to remove all institutional bias and privilege from cases.

“I think that the times, they are moving toward not protecting any perpetrators of anything,” Johnson said. “So if somebody is a perpetrator, obviously it has to be adjudicated in a fair and balanced way for both sides.”

Tim Evans, professor of veterinary pathology and Student Affairs Committee chairman, handed out resources on Title IX and discussed faculty training on mandatory reporting and related issues.

“With respect to Title IX, I believe there are a lot of important steps being taken towards prevention (of sexual assault),” he said.
Evans also discussed the ongoing search for a permanent Title IX administrator to succeed Interim Title IX Coordinator Linda Bennett and how the change in titles might represent an evolution in MU’s handling of sexual assault cases.

“Linda Bennett is the Interim Title IX Coordinator. This will be the Title IX administrator,” he said. “So there’s a subtle difference there in the hope that, with a permanent person, there will be an increasing of the staff and supervisory roles.”

Evans said MU will rely on a committee of administrators, faculty, staff and students, instead of hiring an outside search firm. He said the search committee aims to reduce the pool of initial applicants down to “three or four” top candidates and asked for input from the council.

“All of us need to get busy and be aware of individuals who might be stellar in that role,” Johnson said.

Evans also extolled the university’s new Title IX website for its accessibility and usefulness and encouraged council members to explore its resources.

“I do believe our Title IX website is very easy to get to,” he said. “I challenge you to go to almost any other university in the United States and try to do the same thing, because it won’t happen.”

Johnson discussed the immediacy and relevance of sexual assault prevention efforts, referencing the frequency of Clery releases detailing campus incidents.

“We want to be strong leaders in this whole initiative,” Johnson said. “We want to take the lead in doing a stellar prevention-type program.”

Members of the council discussed the various sexual assault prevention initiatives and programs on and near campus and how they might complement university initiatives.

Angela Speck, professor of astronomy and Diversity Enhancement Committee chairwoman, commended current student efforts to tackle sexual assault on campus. The “Enough is Enough” campaign, launched in September by the Missouri Students Association, is a valuable resource for faculty to join, she said.

“It’s not difficult to make all the connections that make it easier to do all this stuff,” Speck said.

Evans pointed to Wednesday’s “Missouri Men Say No More” campaign kickoff at the Missouri Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence conference in Columbia, saying MU was “extremely well represented” at the event.

“We made a very public statement about our trying to address these issues,” he said.

Johnson said all groups on campus need to be involved in working to prevent sexual violence.
“This whole movement toward prevention and safety has to be en masse,” she said. “If we don’t engage everybody, I don’t think we’re going to be as impactful as we can be.”

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Columbia's 29th Veterans Day parade salutes veterans

Sunday, November 9, 2014 | 6:49 p.m. CST; updated 7:03 p.m. CST, Sunday, November 9, 2014
BY YIZHU WANG

COLUMBIA — About an hour before the festivities started, Gloria Frazier waited with her daughter Erin Frazier for the 29th Veterans Day Parade hosted by the MU ROTC.

Gloria Frazier, a resident of Columbia, said it was their first time attending the annual event. Her husband, John Frazier, a U.S. Army veteran who served in the Vietnam War from 1967 to 1969, passed away in July.

“That’s kind of why we are here now,” Frazier said. “This makes us feel closer to him.”

Frazier was one of the many parade watchers in attendance Sunday afternoon to honor members of the military. The parade started at 1:30 p.m. and featured groups marching along Eighth Street, from the Frances Quadrangle to the Boone County Courthouse.

The Boone County Fire District Pipe and Drum Band played songs as members from six other organizations walked to the rhythm of the music, including Cub Scout Pack 992, the Missouri Military Academy, and the MU Navy, Air Force and Army ROTC programs.

Karen Ernst and her family drove two hours from Eureka, Missouri, for the parade. Her son Jeffrey Ernst, an MU freshman in ROTC program, marched in the parade.

“We are happy to be here to watch all the soldiers march,” Karen Ernst said. “You get a good feeling to be an American.”
The roughly 15-minute parade ended at the Boone County Courthouse. A 24-hour vigil that started on Saturday in front of the war memorials at the Boone County Courthouse plaza also ended during the closing ceremony around 2 p.m.

At the ceremony, Lt. Gen. Richard Harding shared stories about the remarkable soldiers he has met during his career in the military.

“Every American generation answers the call to serve and does what is necessary to preserve and protect this nation,” Harding said in his speech.

Capt. Travis Miller, a war veteran and a member of the Missouri Army National Guard, has brought his daughter to the parade for the past three years.

“For people that serve, every day is Veterans Day,” Miller said. “You don’t forget your service. It’s always there with you.”

Supervising editor is Hunter Woodall.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

MU prepares for week of veterans events

Saturday, November 8, 2014 | 9:12 p.m. CST; updated 9:22 p.m. CST, Saturday, November 8, 2014
BY ELIZABETH THARAKAN

COLUMBIA — With Veterans Day approaching, MU students and faculty are preparing for a week of events celebrating members of the military.

On Sunday, the 29th Veterans Day Parade, hosted by the MU ROTC will help kick off the week's events.

Kathy Murray, associate director of the Department of Student Life said she hopes the community turns out for the event.
"I really wouldn't hazard a guess as to how many people to expect, but we'd like to think the community will be supportive of these events," Murray said. "We want every seat full."

On Monday night, Army veteran J.R. Martinez will deliver a speech at the Missouri Theatre. After a road-side bomb explosion burned over 34 percent of Martinez's body, he responded by writing an autobiography “Full of Heart: My Story of Survival, Strength and Spirit.” According to the MU Veterans Center website, Martinez will speak about undergoing 33 different surgeries with resilience and optimism.

A symposium held Tuesday by the MU School of Law Veterans Clinic will discuss post-traumatic stress disorder and military sexual trauma. Gen. Richard Harding, a former judge advocate general lawyer with the Air Force, will lead the symposium at MU School of Law.

The laying of ceremonial wreaths under the tower of Memorial Union will also happen Tuesday.

Stormie Dunn, a veteran who wrote "Silenced No More: The Courage of a Soldier – Life After Military Sexual Trauma," will speak Thursday at the Multicultural Center. According to a news release from the MU News Bureau, Dunn will talk about her advocacy for those who have experienced sexual trauma in the military.

MU Veterans Center Director Carol Fleisher said the speakers make this year's celebration distinct.

"Less than 1 percent of the U.S. population has been in these two conflicts, Iraq and Afghanistan," Fleisher said. "It is an all-volunteer force and these people have given up a whole lot to go fight for the U.S., many have given up their lives. It's good to be able to show our appreciation and our respect for doing that."

Supervising editor is Hunter Woodall.
Missouri sophomore cornerback Aarion Penton has been suspended indefinitely by the team after he was arrested on suspicion of marijuana possession Friday morning by Columbia police.

Penton’s arrest, his second since March, was for alleged possession of fewer than 35 grams of marijuana, a Class A misdemeanor.

It’s unclear if Penton would be reinstated before the Tigers’ next game, Nov. 15 at Texas A&M.

Missouri, which moved into first place in the SEC East last week with a 20-10 win against Kentucky, already will be without senior strong safety Braylon Webb for the first half because of NCAA rules. He was flagged for targeting and ejected late in the fourth quarter against the Wildcats.

Last March, Penton was arrested along with teammate Shaun Rupert and two basketball players, Wes Clark and Shane Rector, on suspicion of marijuana possession. Rector has since transferred from MU.
Penton, Rupert and wide receiver J’Mon Moore, who was in the car but not cited during the March incident, were all suspended from the Tigers’ first spring practice.

Penton — a 5-foot-11, 185-pound corner from St. Louis — ranks 10th on Missouri with 30 tackles, including two for a loss. His seven pass breakups and 10 passes defended lead the Tigers, while his three interceptions ranks second behind Webb.

Read more here: http://www.kansascity.com/sports/college/sec/university-of-missouri/article3652583.html#storylink=cpy

MU police investigate strong-arm robbery

By the Tribune's staff

Friday, November 7, 2014 at 12:45 pm Comments (1)

The University of Missouri Police Department is investigating a report of a strong-arm robbery that happened near University Heights on Thursday morning.

A man was approached from behind between 9 and 9:30 a.m., struck with an object and had cash taken, MUPD Capt. Brian Weimer said in a news release. The suspect was described as a heavy-set white man between 5 feet 10 inches and 6 feet tall and wearing a hoodie.

University Heights, 701 S. Providence Road, is housing for graduate students, students with families and undergraduates older than 21, according to MU Residential Life.

Anyone with information about the incident is asked to call Detective Sam Easley at 573-884-3721 or CrimeStoppers at 573-875-8477.

Weimer sent the information as a Clery release. Campus police nationwide are required to disclose information about crimes on or near school property as a result of the federal Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Police and Campus Crime Statistics Act of 1998.
JEFFERSON CITY, MO. - Missouri voters have handed Republican state lawmakers an immense amount of power.

As a result of the recent elections, Republicans will have some of their largest-ever majorities when the House and Senate convene in January. They also will carry new authority to override the budget decisions of Democratic Gov. Jay Nixon, thanks to voter approval of a constitutional amendment.

The large majorities mean Republican legislators can enact any law they want, even if Nixon vetoes it. And they can spend money on anything they desire, even if the governor believes the state cannot afford it.

In short: "The Legislature is going to run the state of Missouri over next two years, not Governor Nixon," said House Speaker Tim Jones, R-Eureka.

Jones won't be around to enjoy the spoils of victory; he's leaving office in January because of term limits. The newfound power will be held by state Rep. John Diehl, the current House majority leader who has been nominated as the next speaker.

The Missouri Constitution allows the Legislature to override gubernatorial vetoes by a two-thirds vote of both chambers. Republicans already held a supermajority before the election, but just barely. Come January, their ranks will swell to 118 House seats and 25
Senate seats — well more than the 109 House and 23 Senate votes needed for veto overrides.

Because voters also approved constitutional Amendment 10, legislators will be able to use that same two-thirds vote to override gubernatorial decisions to freeze or slow spending for budgeted programs. Legislators, not the governor, will have the final say on spending decisions.

The shift could come into play quickly, because Nixon currently is blocking about $720 million of spending while asserting that the state won't have enough revenues to cover it all. If Nixon has not relaxed those spending restrictions by the time lawmakers convene, "my guess is we're going to get a tryout of Amendment 10," Diehl said.

Nixon has continued to defend his budget decisions, saying revenues would have to grow at 11 percent — more than double what’s anticipated — to fully fund everything.

"That's why I will continue to exercise fiscal restraint in order to keep the budget balanced and our state on a sustainable track," Nixon said after last week's elections.

Since he took office in 2009, Nixon has restricted more than $2 billion of spending, including some items that were frozen as leverage to try to persuade lawmakers not to enact tax breaks. Frustration with those tactics is what led lawmakers to refer Amendment 10 to the ballot.

Diehl said the election results could be viewed as "a repudiation" of how Nixon has governed over the past couple of years.

**But political science professor Jay Dow, of the University of Missouri-Columbia, said it may be inaccurate to interpret the election as an intentional slap to Nixon, who has two years remaining in office. The enlarged Republican legislative majorities were part of a national trend and may have occurred regardless of what Nixon had done in office, Dow said.**

Passage of the budget amendment may also have had less to do with voter frustrations about Nixon than a simple reading of the generally appealing ballot wording. The
measure stated that it would require the governor to pay the public debt, prohibit him from relying on revenue from legislation not yet passed when proposing a budget and provide a "legislative check" on the governor's budget decisions to restrict funding for education and other services.

The election doesn't make Nixon irrelevant, Dow said, but "it certainly puts him in a position where he's got to be able to negotiate better with the Republicans in the Legislature, because they have enough of a majority that they could sideline him if they wanted to."

Diehl said he's willing to work with Nixon. But if the governor does "not provide meaningful input during the process, I think we'll exercise our majorities and our budgetary tools we that we're now afforded under the Missouri Constitution," he added.

Read more here: http://www.kansascity.com/news/state/missouri/article3675196.html#storylink=cpy

Top earners tend to shoulder biggest student loans

November 08, 2014 8:30 pm  •  By JASON LANGE • Reuters

NO MU MENTION

WASHINGTON • Young Americans with big college debts are often portrayed as struggling to pay their bills. The reality is somewhat different: Those owing super-sized student loans tend to be higher paid. A Reuters analysis of Federal Reserve data shows that over the past two decades the young with higher incomes have gone from owing less of the debt than the average household to owing considerably more.
U.S. student loan balances have quadrupled since 2004 to $1.1 trillion, prompting credit rating agency Standard & Poor’s and others to express fears the borrowing could crimp consumer spending, especially home buying, and eventually lead to the painful bursting of a bubble. Worries over high loan levels have also been voiced by President Barack Obama and more recently, Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen.

Without doubt, many families struggle to pay the rising costs of college, and high levels of unemployment have only added to the distress. Delinquency rates on student loans remain well above historically average levels.

But the analysis of the Federal Reserve’s Survey of Consumer Finances, a triennial survey published in September with 2013 data, makes it clear that heavy borrowing is usually rewarded with big salaries. The increased concentration of debt among the well-paid should ease concerns that the surge in debt is a wider economic threat.

The data show that most of the nation’s overall loan balances are held by those earning more than $60,000. Moreover, among households that owed at least $60,000 and were young, defined as those headed by someone between 20 and 40 years of age, average income last year was $82,000.

This includes people like Larry Perrone.

His journey into the legal profession started at the private Florida Coastal School of Law in Jacksonville, Fla. He had been working as a bartender and planned to borrow around $130,000, figuring he could make $80,000 a year as a lawyer at a private practice.

Perrone did well in his studies, and after a year and a half transferred to the more expensive William & Mary School of Law in Williamsburg, Va. That meant more borrowing, but potentially a lifetime of higher earnings because his degree would be stamped by a much more prestigious school.

“If you’re going to get a tattoo, do you go to a really expensive place or to a cheap guy? It wasn’t a really difficult decision for me,” Perrone said.

In 2008 after graduating nearly $200,000 in the red, he took a job at a big firm in Washington, making $160,000 a year. “It worked out well.” He initially put off buying a home, but finished paying his loans this year and is now eyeing a condo in Florida.

**THE WOW FEATURE**

Perrone’s story is part of a larger trend in which heavy borrowing is increasingly rewarded with big salaries. Seen another way, as the salaries of the well-educated have grown relative to everyone else over the last quarter century, so has the borrowing that has paid for their training.

By last year, the top fifth of total households by income, or those making more than $101,000, was on the hook for roughly a third of student loan balances, nearly twice their share in 1989, according to the Fed survey. At
the beginning of the period, student loans were mostly held by middle income families — the next two fifths down the income ladder. But their share fell sharply by 2013 and the share of the bottom two fifths held about steady.

The data does not show the income of students’ parents so it is not possible to draw conclusions about the backgrounds of heavy borrowers. The numbers do suggest, however, that worries that America is heading for a debt crisis over student loans are overblown.

“There’s no bubble here,” said Sandy Baum, a professor of higher education at George Washington University. “People who borrow a lot tend to end up with high paying jobs.”

Take Baker Logan, who borrowed about $120,000 to get an engineering degree from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, which data firm Payscale ranks as a top three school for long-term alumni earnings. The average mid-career MIT grad makes $128,800 a year.

“MIT has that name, so you immediately get that wow feature when you’re talking to employers,” Logan said. He graduated this year and is working at a consulting company in Woburn, Mass. Logan, who asked that his current income not be disclosed, expects to pay off his 30-year student loan ahead of schedule.

The data also suggests that the more you study, the more you earn, even if it means building up much larger debts.

Last year, a young American household with student debt and a main breadwinner with four years of college owed $32,000 and earned about $61,000 on average.

The income is a third more than the earnings of a family with just a high school diploma.

And the rewards were even higher for young families that have a member who did graduate studies. They owed $55,000 but this came with an income of $99,000 on average.

Jason Delisle, an education policy expert at the New America Foundation in Washington, has analyzed government data and estimates that about 40 percent of current U.S. student loan balances were taken out to finance grad school. This, he says, should temper worries about the debt burden’s wider impact.

“It’s almost like the problem goes away,” said Delisle, who used to be a senior analyst on the Republican staff of the U.S. Senate Budget Committee.

TOO LITTLE OF A GOOD THING

While more Americans go to college and grad school than a generation ago, annual growth in enrollment has slowed since the 1980s and many economists believe this has been a key force in lifting the incomes of the affluent relative to the rest of the country.
The theory is that the supply of well-educated workers is falling short of demand in an increasingly high-tech economy, pushing the wages of college grads higher.

This makes it easier to pay back money borrowed for increasingly pricey educations. New York Fed researchers said in September that even though college tuition has soared in recent decades, higher wages mean a four-year college grad in 2013 will on average break even on their investment in about 10 years, half the time it took for students who graduated in the 1970s.

Rising debt levels nonetheless worry some policymakers, including Yellen. Citing the same Fed survey, she noted in October that for the bottom half of U.S. families by net wealth, student loans balances grew to 58 percent of yearly income in 2013 from 26 percent in 1995.

The Obama administration worries that some colleges, particularly private ones, might be overcharging students for degrees that don’t lead to good jobs. The impact of the 2007-09 recession has weighed heavily on this group, as it has on those who borrowed for college but dropped out before graduating.

Kris Parker graduated with a law degree from Florida Coastal and about $200,000 in debt but has struggled to make enough money to make loan payments.

“My credit has been ripped apart,” he said. “I can’t buy a car. I have a hard time buying furniture.”

As the debate over Missouri educational standards dominates headlines, one might lose sight of the ultimate goal of education — to give our students the knowledge and skills they need for success in life. We’ve been doing a pretty good job of that in Missouri, but we could reach much higher.

In fact, one of my proudest accomplishments as commissioner of education is the development of the Top 10 by 20 initiative, an ambitious plan to raise student achievement across Missouri to rank among the top 10 states by 2020.

The initiative has three primary goals:

1. All Missouri students will graduate college- and career-ready.
Currently, a third of Missouri graduates require remediation upon entering college, costing Missouri’s families a fortune in college classes that earn no credit. Missouri’s public schools continue to take achievement seriously and are working hard to ensure all students are prepared to succeed.

2. All Missouri children will enter kindergarten prepared to be successful in school.

High-quality early childhood education makes children more successful in the classroom, and the benefits affect their entire lives. In Missouri, every 3- and 4-year-old child should have quality learning opportunities at home or in a formal setting.

3. Missouri will prepare, develop and support effective educators.

The success of the Top 10 by 20 initiative will depend on classroom teachers and school leaders. Missouri has updated and strengthened educator preparation and the evaluation system standards to help ensure that each classroom has a highly effective teacher, and each school a highly effective leader.

I believe Missouri can rank among the top 10 states by 2020. We are already making progress with higher ACT scores, increased graduation rates and a focus on higher standards.

We can’t stop now. Missouri’s student achievement is improving, but it’s not where it could or should be. I invite everyone to learn more about the Top 10 by 20 initiative by visiting this website: dese.mo.gov/top-10-by-20. Our children deserve all of our support and the best education we can offer.

Chris L. Nicastro • Jefferson City
Commissioner, Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Online university helps make college education a reality

November 08, 2014 12:00 am

I wholeheartedly agree with your editorial highlighting the importance of putting higher education back within reach (“Economic undevelopment,” Nov. 3). It truly is the steppingstone to brighter futures for Missourians
and their families, and it’s key for creating the educated workforce that is essential for real economic development.

In considering ideas to make college education a reality for more Missourians, particularly for those who have tried college at one point but never completed their degree, a lot can be learned from models like that of WGU Missouri. It’s the only accredited, nonprofit online university endorsed by the state of Missouri, and it is at the forefront of the college affordability issue.

Founded in 2013, WGU Missouri has grown to approximately 1,250 students statewide, 357 of these in the St. Louis area alone. The growth is largely due to WGU Missouri’s affordability, with flat-rate tuition of about $6,000 per year. WGU’s industry-leading, competency-based model, which leverages existing on-the-job experience, also helps students earn their degree faster, so they graduate with far less debt or none at all.

The lower cost doesn’t sacrifice quality. Ninety-eight percent of employers rate WGU’s graduates as good as or better than others, and WGU graduates get jobs in fields where there is a high demand for educated workers, such as education, information technology, health care and business.

There’s no question that we need more options for affordable higher education, but for busy students who do not have access to more traditional colleges and universities, WGU Missouri is one affordable option right now.

Angie Besendorfer • Clayton Chancellor, WGU Missouri

Prepaid tuition plans: Trust them or don't

November 09, 2014 12:15 am • By Jim Gallagher jgallagher@post-dispatch.com 314-340-8390

NO MU MENTION

Say you’re a die-hard alumna of dear old SLU, or U of I, or wherever. When your baby is born, you buy her a little T-shirt with your alma mater’s logo. You hang a school pennant on her wall and think of the day when she will follow in your footsteps.
You are a prime target for a pitch from a prepaid tuition program. You pay now and the program promises to pay your school’s tuition years hence — no matter how high tuition may go. Most plans let you use the money at other colleges as well, although there are limits and restrictions.

They dangle the promise of buying tomorrow’s education at a price at or slightly above today’s tuition. That pitch has appeal, because tuition has been rising faster than paychecks for most of the past three decades.

There are two varieties of prepaid plans: those run by several states and the Private College 529 plan based in Clayton. Both have their downsides.

The state plans have a lousy reputation for fiscal rectitude. Some — including College Illinois — took a hit when the Great Recession shrunk their investment portfolio while tuition rose fast. Some plans have already failed.

That left parents to wonder whether the plans could come up with enough money once their children were ready for college.

“They may ultimately have to renege on their promise,” says Mark Kantrowitz, a financial aid expert and senior vice president at Edvisors.com. “They promise a lot, and the peace of mind may be specious.”

So, that promise is a leap of faith.

Private College 529 works differently. Under that plan, the colleges promise to provide the education even if the plan can’t pony up. If you buy a year at Webster University today, Webster promises to deliver a year’s schooling years from now.

The downside is a very skimpy return on investment — or even a loss — if you go outside the plan’s network of private colleges. And participation in the plan doesn’t give your kid a leg up in the admissions process.

The prepaid plans are a subspecies of “529” college savings plans, named after a provision in the tax code. All let investments grow tax-free if they are used for higher education — a big advantage.

Kantrowitz, for one, doesn’t like prepaid plans. He’s a fan of the plain vanilla 529 plans in which parents choose among mutual funds and hope they do well enough to pay for college.

“With that 529, you’re getting all the reward and all the risk. With prepaid plans, it’s a bit of smoke and mirrors,” he says.

Public university tuition has risen on average 6.7 percent per year for the past decade, while private college rose at a 4.7 percent pace, according to Morningstar, the mutual fund analysis firm. Morningstar notes that the pace of increase has slowed recently.
Money invested in an S&P 500 Index stock fund has returned 7.5 percent over that period ended in December, while the broad bond market has returned 4.6 percent. So, plain vanilla 529 savers have a decent chance of keeping up with tuition.

Let’s take a closer look at both kinds of prepaid plans.

Private College 529 has deals with 271 private nonprofit colleges across the country. Among the nearby colleges and universities are St. Louis University, Webster, Washington, Maryville, Westminster, Hannibal-LaGrange, Bradley, Knox and Culver-Stockton. Big names elsewhere include MIT, Stanford, Vassar, Carnegie Mellon and Rice.

The deal is that you buy tuition at today’s prices at a target school. But you can apply it to any other participating school at a fixed rate. For instance, a year at School X might equal half a year at School Y or two years at School Z. The percentages are fixed when you buy and don’t change.

“If your kid turns out to be a math wizard, you can see how much you’d owe at MIT,” says Nancy Farmer, director of the private college plan and former state treasurer of Missouri.

What if the student chooses a school that’s not on the list? You’ll get at most a 2 percent annual yield on your investment if the plans investments do well, and the plan may subtract up to 2 percent a year if their funds do poorly.

That’s a rotten return. A parent could buy a 10-year Treasury bond and get about 2.35 percent annually with no risk at all.

State universities aren’t included. So, the best values in education are outside the plan.

Still, if your heart is set on sending Junior to Dear Old Dad’s alma mater, a Private College 529 is a strong nudge in that direction for a school in the plan. Investors must invest at least three years before the money is needed.

That gets us to state prepaid tuition plans. Several states have them, including Illinois, but not Missouri. Promises are limited to tuition at state universities and community colleges.

Their record is not reassuring. Several plans guessed wrong years ago, underestimating tuition increases and overestimating their probable investment gains. The Great Recession left them in a hole.

Alabama’s prepaid plan went insolvent in 2009. After much wrangling, investors settled for partial payments instead of full tuition.

Colorado’s plan shut down in 2013. Savers got a 5.5 percent return on their investments instead of the full tuition they had been hoping for.
Some plans have to keep taking in new money in order to pay out funds as students hit college age, says Kantrowitz, in what he calls a “state-sanctioned Ponzi scheme.”

Only a few states promise to make up any shortfalls, and Illinois isn’t one of them. In Illinois, the plan is a “moral obligation” of the state, not a legal one. The Legislature would have to vote for a bailout.

A critical audit in 2012 cited conflicts of interest by top officials, shoddy management and tripling expenses in the College Illinois plan. The plan had only 70 percent of the money needed to meet its promises. Gov. Pat Quinn replaced the leadership, and the new leaders hired new investment managers.

The plan was still just 72 percent funded as of last year, although plan officials say they expect considerable improvement when this year’s actuarial report is released.

Many state plans, including the Illinois plan, actually charge new investors more than the current price of tuition, adding an administration fee.

Still, College Illinois this year is reducing the price of its tuition guarantees, by up to 29 percent for some options. The recent slower pace of tuition increases prompted them to reduce projections of future costs.

College Illinois allows families to buy up to 100 percent of in-state tuition at community colleges and state universities. Families can also use the money at other colleges, receiving amounts based on the average tuition of Illinois state colleges.

In most prepaid plans, families can buy tuition credits a little at a time or all at once.

It’s hard to tell how a prepaid plan will affect financial aid. The federal financial aid formula treats all prepaid 529 plans the same — as assets of the parent. The federal aid formula demands less from them than from the student’s own assets.

Prepaid participants might even benefit slightly here, since they must report only the amount they’d receive if they cashed the plan in, and that’s generally less than the amount of tuition they’ve purchased.

Still, you may end up overpaying with a prepaid plan. Many colleges — especially private ones — routinely discount the sticker-price tuition to get bodies in the seats. Will they offer less to a family that has already bought a year or two of tuition?

Leaders of the Private College 529 plan say their schools have promised to treat their investors the same as anyone else.
Columbia Housing Authority will ban smoking in public housing starting May 1

By Andrew Denney

Saturday, November 8, 2014 at 12:00 am Comments (10)

Starting May 1, the Columbia Housing Authority will ban smoking inside public housing units, a new rule that has been instituted by hundreds of housing authorities across the country and is being met with mixed reviews by residents.

“We’re not forcing anyone to stop smoking, we’re just asking them to step outside,” said Lee Radtke, the authority’s director of public housing operations, at a Thursday meeting of the housing authority’s Resident Advisory Board.

Radtke emphasized smoking would be allowed on the housing authority’s property, just not inside buildings.

The CHA Board of Commissioners voted Oct. 21 to approve the ban. In a letter to the advisory board dated two days after the passage of the new policy, Radtke wrote that rumors were “already flying among residents” and many were “imagining the worst outcome possible.”

The new policy does not pertain to recipients of housing choice vouchers — better known as the Section 8 program — who use the vouchers to obtain housing in the private market. The authority has a total of 719 public housing units on Park Avenue and on several blocks just west of Providence Road, at Oak Tower, Paquin Tower and at its Bear Creek family site. The ban includes e-cigarettes.

According to a 2012 notice from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, more than 225 housing authorities across the country had adopted nonsmoking policies.

In a presentation to the advisory board, Radtke said, the ban will be beneficial to the health and safety of residents and will help the housing authority save on maintenance costs. When tenants who smoke in their units move out, the housing authority must repaint the units to cover smoke stains and replace stained blinds. Additionally, the authority might have to replace burnt carpets and tabletops.
Radtke said at the meeting that the ban will go into effect regardless of the input it receives from tenants. But she said tenants would be able to weigh in on possible “tweaks” to the new policy — such as whether or not the housing authority should establish shelters for smokers or if there should be additional exterior lighting to ensure their safety — that would be subject to final approval by the board of commissioners.

Members of the advisory board did not voice opposition to the policy at the meeting. But Dave Dollens, a Paquin Tower resident and board member, said after the meeting that he would prefer that the policy not be implemented, though he said he accepts its inevitability.

“They ought to be able to smoke in their own house,” said Dollens, who said he was a regular smoker until he quit about two decades ago.

Wilma Blair, an advisory board member who lives in a unit on Park Avenue, said she has heard from tenants who are angry about the new policy, but she supports it.

Secondhand smoke, Blair said, is a “touchy” issue for her — she was once a smoker herself and has a friend who is a nonsmoker who allowed Blair to smoke in his house. The friend was later diagnosed with lung cancer, she said, and she feels responsible.

“He’s suffering for something someone else did,” Blair said.

The housing authority’s decision to ban smoking falls in line with a push by local institutions working to curb smoking. The Columbia City Council recently approved a permit to allow the University of Missouri to prohibit smoking on city streets on campus, effectively banning smoking campuswide. Smoking has been banned on all other parts of campus for more than a year.

In September, First Ward Councilwoman Ginny Chadwick proposed legislation to increase the minimum age to purchase tobacco products to 21 years old and to add e-cigarettes to the city’s indoor smoking ban. Those proposals are still under review by the city’s Board of Health and its Substance Abuse Advisory Commission, which are both scheduled to discuss the proposals at meetings next week.
From better seeds to beneficial insects, K-State researchers fight world hunger

By Mará Rose Williams

11/09/2014 8:24 PM

Manhattan, Kan. - Can a wasp feed the world?

It can help.

If its larvae are nurtured near millet fields where a devastating moth steals harvests from the field, they can grow to become predators that destroy the pests and save a crop. And that just might put more food in more mouths and earn money for struggling farmers in the world’s poorest countries.

“In some sense, the science, how to increase crop productivity, is the easier part,” said Gary Pierzynski, a Kansas State University researcher. “The challenge is how to get the people from these developing countries to do it.”

His work to that end, and that of others on the K-State campus, has brought $100 million in federal grants to the university to explore the varied and complicated questions of how to feed the world’s fast-growing population amid quickening climate change.

K-State boasts four laboratories enlisted in the U.S. government’s Feed the Future innovation plan. It is an initiative to attack world hunger with better crops, smarter tactics to fight off pests and disease, more efficient distribution of harvests — all in ways that can turn profits for small-scale farmers in the poorest parts of the world.

Of the 15 university sites where Feed the Future labs are operating, only the University of California-Davis’ five labs outnumber those at K-State. There are 25 labs in all,
including ones at Michigan State University, the University of Georgia and Texas A&M University.

K-State established its labs over the last two years, winning support for each in a competitive grant process.

“We went after projects we thought we would be the best at,” said Timothy Dalton, the director of K-State’s Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Collaborative Research on Sorghum and Millet. In agriculture, that includes wheat, sorghum, plant pathology, water management and agricultural economics.

Each lab addresses a particular food production dilemma. The researchers collaborate with foreign scientists who share the visions of those at K-State. Those working in Manhattan travel to Asia and Africa several times a year.

**Field work**

This time of year, K-State’s wheat fields are “just mounds of dirt,” said Jesse Poland, the 33-year-old director of the school’s Feed the Future lab for Applied Wheat Genomics.

In greenhouses and in his lab — amid test tubes, beakers and thousands of dollars worth of the latest equipment — Poland and K-State graduate students try to create bigger and more resilient offspring.

The super progeny they hope to craft are new strains of wheat bred to yield hefty harvests in the hottest, driest and hungriest parts of the world.

Poland saw children starving in India when he first traveled there years ago as a graduate student. That motivated him to point his research toward producing a better, more nutrient-rich, more sustainable food supply. He targeted wheat, which is particularly vulnerable to climate change.

“Growing wheat is critical to addressing world hunger,” he said.
About 1.2 billion poor people depend on wheat. In South Asia, where much of Poland’s work is focused, wheat yields are projected to decline 20 percent to 30 percent by 2050, according to the national Feed the Future initiative.

Tiny wheat plants fill a greenhouse in the state-of-the-art Wheat Innovation Center, built across from K-State’s football stadium by the Kansas Association of Wheat Growers.

“Since the Kansas wheat farmers have gotten behind this initiative, my program gets extra support and backing,” Poland said.

That becomes clearer one floor down, where the seeds of 13,533 varieties of wheat from around the world are in cold storage. Some are shipped to farmers across the globe. Others are crossed with the lab wheat to create a hardier plant.

Inside glass greenhouses, some plants are capped with small white baggies for protection against pollination from the wrong source.

Those are the ones that student researchers have already tediously — it’s all done by hand — crossed with some other wheat stock. Under normal conditions, it might take nearly a decade to bring a wheat crop from the lab to the farm that’s more resistant to climate change and drought.

“But we are trying to speed up the process, maybe five years,” Poland said.

Five years is about how long it has been since President Barack Obama in 2009 put at least $3.5 billion in federal funds toward global food security. By 2013, private donors pledged $18.5 million more toward the effort.

The annual budget for the full Feed the Future labs, including all 15 sites, is $32 million a year.

The World Food Program last month reported that about 805 million people, or about 1 in 9, do not have enough food to lead healthy, active lives. The WFP says that number is down by more than 100 million over the last decade. Food is getting to more of the world’s hungry, but it’s a slow process.
The U.S. government’s global hunger and food security initiative reported that Feed the Future reached more than 7 million farmers in 2013. It reached more than 12.5 million children with nutrition interventions that are improving their health and development.

World hunger may seem to be a distant problem in America’s breadbasket. But Dalton said accelerating global climate change could mean that solutions crafted for small-scale Indian or Malaysian farmers could one day save the harvests of industrial-scale wheat and sorghum growers in Kansas.

Consider the threat of the white sugarcane aphid. The tiny, soft-bodied insect sucks sap from plant tissues and excretes a sticky liquid waste called honeydew that clogs harvest equipment. This crop menace multiplies rapidly and has been known to destroy whole fields.

The insect first created a farming crisis in southern Africa in the 1980s. Dalton said that because researchers had fought the bug abroad 30 years ago, they recognized it here and knew its behavior.

Years later, the white sugarcane aphid moved into Florida, then Texas and by 2013 landed in sorghum fields in Arkansas and Kansas.

“We found out that if we spray for aphids at a point before the grain begins to form,” the pest is kept in check with a fairly inexpensive insecticide, Dalton said.

**Reliable harvest**

Most people don’t eat sorghum in the United States, where it primarily is used as cattle feed, but it is a staple on dinner tables in India and Africa.

Sorghum and millet are critical crops in some of the hottest, driest and most impoverished parts of the world. Dalton works with farmers in Ethiopia, Niger and Senegal, among the largest sorghum-producing countries in Africa.

Dalton said he wants to see these small-scale farmers become self-sufficient. That includes helping developing nations establish processes for collecting royalties on any beneficial plant offspring that come from Feed the Future research.
On a field just north of the Manhattan campus, 3,000 varieties of sorghum grow tall, hardy and in many colors — yellow, orange and rusty red. Many of the 150,000 plants come from around the world.

“We are trying to identify the genetic differences ... which gene makes a variety bad for a certain environment and which gene makes one good for a certain environment,” said Geoffrey Morris, an assistant professor of crop genetics and genomics at K-State.

In another K-State lab, researchers from American and foreign universities search for ways to help poor farmers in Ghana, Ethiopia, Guatemala and Bangladesh bring more crops from the field to the market.

Farmers in those countries sometimes lose half their grain in thrashing, storage and transportation, said Venkat Reddy, who directs K-State’s Post-Harvest Loss Reduction Innovation Lab.

“If you see the conditions that some of these poor farmers have, it breaks your heart,” Reddy said.

For the science to take hold around the globe, “developing countries must be involved in the science and the implementation of new farming technology,” Brady Deaton said. Deaton, a chancellor emeritus of the University of Missouri, is the chairman of the Board for International Food and Agricultural Development, which advises the U.S. Agency for International Development, or USAID, on food and agriculture in developing countries.

That is where Pierzynski and his lab come in.

Pierzynski’s lab, which last month won a $50 million grant from USAID, identifies ways to help poor farmers in Africa and South Asia improve land, water, soil, crop and livestock management while also improving the size of the crop yields and sustaining natural resources.
Sometimes it comes down to using animals to do work that chemicals or machines might have done, like the wasps they found that are natural predators of the millet head miner moth.

In the larva stage, the wasps — which are endemic to the developing countries where these infested fields are located — are fed and their nests hung from trees near the millet fields. When the insects mature, they feast on the larvae of the miner bug, then they breed more wasp larvae, more wasps break out and eat the miner moths. And so on.

Read more here: http://www.kansascity.com/news/local/article3681766.html#storylink=cpy

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Second court ruling tosses out Missouri's gay marriage ban but leaves Boone County unaffected

Friday, November 7, 2014 | 8:22 p.m. CST; updated 7:53 a.m. CST, Saturday, November 8, 2014

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BY NICOLE KOTTMANN

COLUMBIA — Same-sex couples were married in the St. Louis and Kansas City areas Friday, but marriage licenses are not expected to be issued in Boone County as of now.

As a result of two court rulings this week overturning Missouri’s gay marriage ban in Jackson County and St. Louis, same-sex couples can now be married in the state's two largest urban centers.

But Boone County Recorder of Deeds Bettie Johnson said the county isn’t issuing marriage licenses for same-sex couples. She said that decision was based on a legal opinion that neither of this week’s rulings gives her the authority to grant licenses to couples of the same gender.
“Either a court ruling or a legislative change that applies to Boone County would allow us to issue same-sex marriage licenses,” Johnson said. “When the final ruling comes, we’re going to have to wait and see what that ruling says to see if they apply.”

On Friday, Ortrie D. Smith, U.S. District Court judge for the Western District of Missouri, ruled that the state law limiting marriage to a union between only a man and a woman violates both the Due Process and the Equal Protection clauses of the Constitution.

“The Court is left, then, with no real reason for the State’s decision to dictate that people of the same gender cannot be married,” Smith wrote.

The ruling arose from a case involving two same-sex couples who were denied marriage licenses in Jackson County in June. The couples sued Robert Kelly, director of the Jackson County Recorder of Deeds Department, in order to “enjoin enforcement of state law.”

Although it was unclear whether the ruling took immediate effect, the first licenses were issued at 2 p.m. Friday at the Jackson County Courthouse in Kansas City and the Truman Courthouse in Independence.

“Marriage affords couples important legal protections, ranging from family leave, the ability to care for or visit a sick spouse, the opportunity to secure inheritances, or file for joint insurance,” said Jackson County Executive Mike Sanders in a prepared statement. “I am pleased that our staff is working expeditiously to accommodate applicants.”

According to the Associated Press, the Jackson County recorder of deeds issued 16 licenses Friday. Retired Judge Vernon E. Scoville volunteered to perform the ceremonies in the Jackson County Courthouse.

Smith’s ruling followed a similar decision Wednesday by a state lower-court judge in St. Louis.

Circuit Judge Rex Burlison also ruled that the Missouri law limiting marriage to heterosexual couples violates the Constitution. Same-sex couples in St. Louis began to marry the same day.
Missouri Attorney General Chris Koster appealed the St. Louis decision to the Missouri Supreme Court and said he would appeal the federal ruling to the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

MU law professor Carl H. Esbeck said Friday it was clear from Smith's decision that the judge intended for the attorney general to appeal, with the results indicating the ruling’s true magnitude.

“If the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upholds Judge Smith’s opinion, that ruling would be applicable statewide,” Esbeck said.

Tony Rothert, legal director for the ACLU of Missouri, said he is optimistic about the future of same-sex marriage in Missouri.

“There’s still some tidying up to do to see if marriage equality is applicable in every county in Missouri, but we’re confident that full marriage equality will apply very soon,” Rothert said.

Supervising editor is Jeanne Abbott.