$600,000 in grant money distributed to MU Medicine & Engineering

Posted: Dec 29, 2014 2:47 PM by Mark Bergin, KOMU 8 Reporter

Updated: Dec 29, 2014 11:06 PM

Watch the video:
http://www.komu.com/player/?video_id=27083&zone=2,5&categories=2,5

COLUMBIA - Researchers at the MU schools of medicine and engineering say new grants totaling $600,000 will open new avenues of exploration and potentially benefit many patients.

The University of Missouri’s Coulter Translational Partnership Program dispersed the funds to six different biomedical research projects in September.

The money helps research teams launch projects from lab studies to health care innovations. Each team includes a faculty member from one of the two schools.

"It's a very close relationship on this project," MU Coulter Program Director Cynthia Helphingstine said. "Both parties are essential. You couldn't do this program without the other."

Funding for the research projects is provided by a $5 million partnership that began in 2012 between MU and the Wallace H. Coulter Foundation. The Coulter program pays for two-thirds of the $5 million total at about $3.33 million while MU pays for one-third at about $1.67 million. The partnership between MU and the Coulter Foundation runs until 2017.

The six projects include:

- Improve wireless communication from outside to inside the body
- Identify tuberculosis
- Early breast cancer detection
- Engineered knee cartilage
Improved success rates of cartilage transplants

Gold nanoparticles for cancer detection

"Translational research means taking something that is an interesting research idea and moving it from the bench in the laboratory into clinical use," Helphingstine said.

Helphingstine said the grants distributed geared more to MU faculty than toward the students.

"We get the faculty researchers, people that have understand all of these issues, and have spent their careers to solve problems," Helphingstine said. "This is finally the culmination of bringing a lot of that work together.

Jeff Hoelscher of the MU Health System said each of the six teams received about $100,000.

Dr. Ferris Pfeiffer is an assistant professor of orthopedic surgery in the MU Department of Bioengineering and Orthopedic Surgery. The Coulter program awarded Pfeiffer grant money for the second year in a row to improve success rates in cartilage transplants.

Pfeiffer works with Dr. James Stannard, the J. Vernon Luck Sr. Distinguished Professor in Orthopaedic Surgery and chair of the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery at the MU School of Medicine, to treat focal defects in knee and shoulder cartilage. He said his project typically deals with younger patients not ready for knee replacements.

"Our technique is to transplant fresh living, healthy articular cartilage from tissue donors into these patients and return them to full function," Pfeiffer said.

Pfeiffer said it is unlikely he would be able to work on his project without support from the Coulter Foundation.

"Certainly not at the pace we're able to do it," Pfeiffer said. "There are always obstacles to bringing any technology into commercialization. This one where we know will benefit patients greatly."

Helpingstine said the partnership with the Coulter Foundation is very prestigious for MU. MU is the only academic institution offering a Coulter Translational Program in Missouri and is one of 16 across the country.

After an extensive application and selection process during the summer of 2005, the Wallace H. Coulter Foundation announced in October of that year, the names of the nine Universities selected to receive the Coulter Translational Partnership Award in Biomedical Engineering in addition to the already existing program at Georgia Tech and Emory University.

This pioneering group is indicated with yellow markers on the map below and is known as TP1.

Based on the success of TP1, the Foundation announced the establishment of the TP2 Program. The six universities with blue markers in the map below are the latest recipients of the Coulter Translational Partnership Award in Biomedical Engineering.

"It's really been a great opportunity to improve the University of Missouri's ability to work with industry partners, and to ultimately benefit patients," Helphingstine said.
MU's Coulter program provides awards each year to research projects. A committee of 11 entrepreneurs, researchers and capital investors review the proposed projects.

"The process is a little more rigorous than what a typical NIH (National Institutes of Health) grant," MU Assistant Program Director of the Coulter Program Clint Matthews said.

The process to get awarded funding from MU's includes the proposed project's principal investigator to submit a letter of intent. From there the MU Coulter Program selects which letters of intent they want full proposals.

Matthews said the application process provides an in-depth look at the proposed projects' market, clinical need, the standard of care and regulatory intellectual property.

"I kind of liken it to, the grant is not a huge grant, but it really allows you to shoot a small arrow, but a small arrow at a very defined target," Matthews said. "If you're doing that, you have a chance at having a success."

Each person who submits a proposal delivers an oral presentation as well.

Matthews said each year MU's Coulter Programs receives somewhere between 20 to 40 project proposals. In 2014 he said there were about 20.

Helphingstine said she hopes MU and the Coulter Program renew their partnership in 2017.

For more information on the six grants, click here.

For more information on the six grants, click here.

(This story also appeared on several other NBC stations throughout the country)

**Alcohol affects the brain during sleep**

Updated: Mon 12:31 PM, Dec 29, 2014

**Watch the video:**

(NBC) - A nightcap may not be the best way to get to sleep.

**That's because alcohol affects the brain's natural wake and sleep cycles, according to research from the University of Missouri School of Medicine.**
Experts there say that although a drink can help people fall asleep quickly - it ends up disrupting sleep later in the night.

It also acts as a diuretic, increasing the need to use the bathroom.

As many as one in five Americans sometimes drink alcohol before bedtime.

India-born professor Kattesh Katti’s research shows green tea, gold can treat prostate cancer

Jayadevan PK, ET Bureau Dec 29, 2014, 05:07AM IST

BENGALURU: Green tea and gold can help treat prostate cancer. Sounds incredible? Meet Professor Kattesh Katti, whose research claims to prove that.

"Not every day is a great day in research. But I'm hoping that one day, I'll be able to develop nanoparticles that work when injected only around the tumour to minimise toxicity," said Katti, who is on a visit to the Indian Institute of Science-Bangalore.

In the past two weeks, India born Katti has won two major recognitions - the Hevesy Medal Award 2015, which honors outstanding achievement in radioanalytical and nuclear chemistry, and the elite fellowship of the National Academy of Inventors.

Katti's research was instrumental in the discovery of radioactive nanoparticles of gold that can be used to target cancerous cells and destroy tumours. Nanoparticles can be produced in different ways. "When toxic chemicals interact with gold, they produce gold nanoparticles," said Katti. But he discovered that the same effect can be achieved by using a "green" process.

Chemicals extracted from natural substances like cinnamon, mango skin or soybeans have similar powers. "Since nanoparticles are being injected to the body, it's better to reduce the toxicity of the chemicals used to produce them," said Katti.

With many awards and citations to his credit, Katti is a top scientist today. But he traces his roots back to a small town in Karnataka and modest beginnings.

"There were times when we had to choose between dinner and lunch. But that's the beauty of the system in India. If you intend to succeed it allows you to do that," said Katti who lives in the US with his wife, a senior research scientist at the radiology department in the Missouri University, and two children.
Born in Dharwad in a joint family of 30 members, Katti went to a nearby school and picked up an interest in science early on. He was hoping to become a teacher, but a stint at the Indian Institute of Science here changed the course of his life.

"I was trained to be a teacher but going to IISc changed the whole pathway," said the 58-year-old, who completed his PhD from the Indian Institute of Science in 1984.

A year later, he left to Germany as a Hamburg fellow. It was his first international exposure. "I'd never seen so much money in all my life," recalls Katti, whose stipend was 2,200 Deutsche mark a month (in 1985, the then German currency was worth about Rs 8-10.

Katti joined the University of Missouri's school of medicine as an assistant professor in the department of radiology 25 years ago.

Many scientists like Katti have left to the US, mostly because of the bigger opportunities abroad. According to "Global mobility: Science on the move", published by the Nature in 2012, India sends the largest number of scientists abroad and the US is the top destination for foreign scientists.

"India needs to spend more money on science and technology," said Katti, who also advocates for higher contribution from the private sector to science. "Government investment in the US has been going down year after year but private donation has been rising to make up for it," he said

RAISING TOBACCO-PURCHASE AGE TO 21 SPARKS UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI-AREA BACKLASH

by CHRISTOPHER WHITE - UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI on DECEMBER 30, 2014

Law professor predicts federalism challenge to new city law

COLUMBIA, Mo.—Students can legally vote, purchase handguns, join the military and be tried as an adult at the age of 18.

But according to the political elite in Columbia, the home of the University of Missouri, 18 is too young to buy a pack of smokes. And it’s not just Columbia.

The Columbia city council voted 6-1 earlier this month to increase the legal age to purchase tobacco products to 21. The ordinance also restricts the purchase of e-cigarettes and chewing tobacco.

The new law has angered Columbia residents and MU students alike: Opponents have launched three petition referendums to scuttle each part of the law.
Petitioners have until Jan. 5 to collect the signatures of 3,209 registered voters to force the council to reconsider its decision before putting it to the voters.

Columbia First Ward Councilwoman Ginny Chadwick spearheaded the ordinance, the *Missourian* reported. She argues that the public health benefit of increasing the legal age was overwhelming, as many smokers become addicted to cigarettes as teenagers.

Centers for Disease Control research has shown than 90 percent of smokers start the habit before they can legally buy tobacco, the *Missourian* noted.

Chadwick, a University of Missouri graduate student, has courted controversy in the past. *The College Fix* reported that in June, she proposed banning alcohol consumption at a Columbia public park in a predominantly black neighborhood, prompting some in the community to cry racism.

Parroting Chadwick’s argument, MU School of Health Professor Stan Cowan said at the city council meeting that research by doctors showed people were unlikely to smoke if they had not done so by age 21 and could quit more easily if they started that late, *KRCG News* reported.

*A tale of two cities*

The Needham, Mass., smoking age increase, instituted in 2005, was the model for the Columbia ordinance. It has been touted as a success. One Columbia Board of Health member, Lynelle Phillips, told the meeting that Needham cut high school smoking rates in half after raising its tobacco age to 21, *KRCG* said.

There is a caveat, however: As of 2013, nearly a dozen cities in Massachusetts have raised the age for tobacco purchases above 18, making it more difficult for young people to travel outside city limits to buy cigarettes. Columbia is the only city in Missouri thus far to raise its smoking age, giving students in the city wide latitude to travel to neighboring towns for their tobacco fix.

In addition, Massachusetts has a historically low population of smokers: According to a report by the Centers for Disease Control in 2004, one year prior to the signing of the Needham ordinance, only 17 percent of the population of Massachusetts smoked, which was 4 percent lower than the national average during that year.

These numbers suggest that Needham, unlike Missouri, which boasted a higher-than-average smoking population in 2004, has a different attitude toward smoking than does the Show-Me State.

Columbia and Needham are not alone: As of a year ago, the *Salt Lake Tribune* reported, the legal age for tobacco purchase was 19 in Utah, Alaska, Alabama and New Jersey.

*The federalism problem*

The Columbia ordinance, according to MU law professor Richard Reuben, might be doomed. “If the state law states that the age for purchasing tobacco is 18, then any local measure, like one by the city of Columbia, to raise that age might run into some legal challenges,” Reuben told *KOMU 8 News*.

Missouri law states: “Any person or entity who sells tobacco products, alternative nicotine products, or vapor products shall deny the sale of such tobacco products to any person who is less than eighteen
years of age.”

Dan Viets, president of the Missouri Civil Liberties Association, is concerned that Columbia’s council members were picking and choosing which state laws they would support.

“What I really resented is the fact that when an ordinance to create a lesser penalty for marijuana cultivation came before the council earlier this year, the mayor, and certain members of the council who sponsored the tobacco laws were very, very concerned that this would be a conflict with state law,” Viets said in an interview with The College Fix.

But now, with the vote to increase the smoking age, “we could possibly have an ordinance that would conflict with state law,” Viets said. “The city is trying to make illegal what was made legal by state law.”

**Leave town for booze and smokes**
Columbia residents and the student population have pounded the city council’s vote, saying that it violates the individual liberties of young people.

“The tobacco ordinance has nothing to do with stopping underage kids from smoking and everything to do with the council’s addiction to legislating away people’s freedoms,” Jake Loft, chairman of the Mizzou College Republicans and University of Missouri student, told The Fix in an email.

Detractors have said the ordinance is well intentioned but ultimately a piece of legislation that tilts at windmills.

“I have serious doubts that this legislation will successfully decrease 18-20 year old smoking enough to make any sense,” Anthony Vibbard, MU law student and chapter president of the Federalist Society, told The College Fix.

“Any given Saturday, it seems fairly obvious that the drinking age laws have little to no effect on 18-20 year old access to alcohol in Columbia city limits,” Vibbard said.

Spencer Pearson, a Columbia resident and petition gatherer, told The Missourian that the ordinance represents a prohibitionist policy that does not address the underlying health problems associate with using tobacco.

Pearson, a libertarian activist who also advocates marijuana-law reform, told The Fix that “the council passed the ordinance in an attempt to ‘disrupt the supply chain’ but all that will be disrupted are lawful businesses operating within city limits. Smokers’ habits will not be affected.”

College Fix contributor Christopher White is a University of Missouri graduate student and an editorial assistant for The Fix.
Surviving friends rally around suicide documentary

By ASHLEY JOST

Monday, December 29, 2014 at 2:00 pm Comments (2)

The friends and family of Ryan Candice had no idea about the demons he was battling before he took his life earlier this year.

A small group of Candice’s friends is creating a documentary in his honor to highlight his life, the lives of others who committed suicide and the lives of those who are left in their wake, the survivors.

Candice, an MU student from St. Louis, on June 19 took his own life at age 20. According to his Facebook profile, Candice was an international business major and would have graduated in 2015.

“We were looking for a way to turn this situation into something positive,” said Alex Lindley, an MU student and longtime close friend of Candice. “How could I have no idea that Ryan was suicidal even though I was so close to him? That got me thinking a while back that maybe there would be a way to educate people who aren’t professionals to be able to see the signs of suicide with their friends.”

Lindley said about 25 of Candice’s friends are involved in the project, as well as Candice’s brother. Most of those involved are MU students.

“Education is definitely a big factor in” the documentary project, “but we also want to honor Ryan and others who have taken their lives and document the grieving processes of the survivors of suicide,” Lindley said.

In the fewer than 30 days since the group set up a funding page on GoFundMe.com, it raised $500 more than the $20,000 goal. The money is for cameras, microphones and editing software, traveling expenses and the cost of a director, editor and other production fees, Lindley said.

The group is still accepting donations because $20,000 was an estimated cost. Lindley said the more money they raise, the bigger and better they can make the project.

The group also is working on creating an official not-for-profit organization — with the help of Lindley’s older brother, who is an attorney — to “add legitimacy for skeptical donors,” Lindley said. The not-for-profit might also foster an opportunity to continue programming and fundraising even after the documentary.

The volunteers have formed committees to address different parts of the project, such as crowd-source funding, reaching out to psychologists and other professionals to work with them on the project, a financial committee and a thank-you committee that responds to the almost 400 donors.

The group plans to recruit a team of psychologists and other professionals who deal with mental illness and issues related to suicide. That team will be a sounding board throughout the documentary, Lindley said, complementing the thoughts of survivors as they discuss those who are gone.
“I think this is going to turn into a more elaborate thing that doesn't focus on one person’s story but a number of people,” he said. Lindley said several people interested in sharing their stories have already contacted the organizers.

Lindley said the documentary is in the planning stages, and the group plans to hire a production team in the next few weeks.

Leigh Neier, assistant teaching professor in the MU College of Education, agreed to a nominal adviser role after one of the volunteers asked for her to listen in and provide advice.

“It’s not a matter of if this comes to fruition, it’s when,” Neier said about the documentary. “I think the awareness factor is huge here. Oftentimes, we think suicide couldn’t happen to someone we know, but this is something we need to wake up to because it happens everywhere, even at Mizzou.”

Neier, who has a dual appointment in the MU School of Health Professions, said she hopes giving the issue of suicide a public platform will help take the stigma away from seeking out helpful resources, such as counseling centers.

---

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Recent MU graduate, whose company built largest free-range hen farm in U.S., wins FFA award

Tuesday, December 30, 2014 | 6:00 a.m. CST

BY AMBER GARRETT

NO MU MENTION IN STORY

COLUMBIA — Dustin Stanton, 22, has won the National FFA Organization 2014 American Star in Agribusiness Award for his work as co-owner with his brother, Austin, of Stanton Brothers Eggs near Centralia.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, it is the largest free-range egg farm in the United States, producing more than 2.5 million eggs a year.

Stanton Brothers Eggs began when Dustin Stanton received six chicks in elementary school. Now, the farm houses more than 22,000 egg-laying hens.

"The odd thing is we never really planned for this to happen," Dustin Stanton said. "It just did."

After eight years of work, Stanton received the agribusiness award on Nov. 1 during the National FFA Convention and Expo in Louisville, Kentucky. This award is "the highest
achievement for a person pursuing a career in agribusiness," according to the FFA website.

"It was well worth it," Stanton said.

Stanton graduated in December with a bachelor's degree in agricultural business. He returned to the family farm and plans to transform the egg business into a nationwide operation. He also hopes to put his older chickens to use by turning them into a marketable chicken soup once they stop laying eggs.

"The ultimate goal is to sell coast to coast," he said.

Stanton and his family have recently expanded their farm by completing a European-style automated poultry building capable of holding 7,200 hens. The temperature-controlled building allows the farm to produce eggs year-round.

For the record, Stanton said he likes his eggs scrambled. And while he enjoys chicken, he quickly tires of eating it.

Stanton said various companies have offered him jobs and buyouts, but he has rejected those overtures.

"The more I experience other cultures," he said, "the more I kinda like it here."

*Supervising editor is Austin Huquelet.*

**Student Transfers Top List Of Pre-Filed Education Bills Facing Legislators**

**BY TIM LLOYD & DALE SINGER**

When the Missouri General Assembly convenes next month, education will take its usual place as the center of concern for many lawmakers. Here are some of the bills that have been pre-filed for the upcoming legislative session.
Student transfers
Once again this year, the student transfer law is expected to be at the legislative forefront. The first pre-filed bill in the Senate, sponsored by state Sen. David Pearce, R-Warrensburg, revives a plan that cleared the legislature during the 2014 session but was ultimately vetoed by Gov. Jay Nixon who cited two reasons for his veto.

1. First, he opposed a provision to allow students in unaccredited districts to use public money to attend nonsectarian private schools.

2. Second, Nixon said he opposed that the bill because it would allow receiving districts not to count the test scores of transfer students in exchange for charging the sending districts less in tuition.

State Sen. Scott Sifton, D-Affton, has filed a separate bill that eliminates the option for private schools. State Sen. Maria Chappelle-Nadal, D-University City, has also pre-filed a bill similar to Pearce’s.

In the House, state Rep. David Wood, R-Versailles, said he’s taking a piece-by-piece approach to addressing student transfers. Like Pearce’s plan, his bill would accredit individual schools rather than entire districts. Students would first be given the option to transfer to an accredited building, and if all seats were filled, students attending an unaccredited school could transfer to an accredited district in the same or adjoining county.

Under HB42, tuition charged by receiving districts could not exceed the amount spent on teachers’ wages, incidental costs, debts service and maintenance costs. If there is a disagreement about tuition, the Board of Education would have the authority to settle the dispute. Unlike Pearce’s bill, Wood’s plan does not include an option for nonsectarian private schools.

“I have an approach of taking it in small pieces; the Senate has the approach of the whole bill,” Wood said. “We’ll get into session and see which way it can move.”

School, not fines or jail for misdemeanors
State Rep. Rochelle Walton Gray, D-Black Jack, has pre-filed 14 separate bills to address longstanding concerns brought to the forefront after the fatal police shooting of Michael Brown. Among them is a two-sentence piece of legislation to allow juvenile courts to consider ordering a young person to attend school in lieu of fines or jail time for misdemeanor violations. Under HB61, if a student had two unexcused absences, the court could then consider detaining or fining the young person.

“This gives them an opportunity to go back to school, establish that you’re going to be a good student, have good attendance and not have to be sentenced to any fine or jail time,” Walton Gray said.
A separate bill, HB60, requires community service instead of a fine for certain traffic violations for drivers 18 and younger.

“Having to pay a traffic fine and being unable to pay it can have a snowball effect and have serious repercussions,” Walton Gray said. “Especially for a juvenile who is in high school or college who has to miss school because a warrant is issued and they don’t have the money to pay.”

Walton Gray has also filed HB71, which establishes a task force on police officer presence in schools and communities within the Missouri Department of Public Safety, and HB54, which allows schools to incorporate criminal justice instruction into curriculum. Walton gray said she may file additional, larger bills that group together some of separate bills she has filed.

**Keeping test making business in-state**
Wood has also filed a bill to require all statewide student tests be developed and implemented by a university with an education program in the state of Missouri after June 2017. He said the bill is a response to the state moving away from the Common Core state standards, which will be used next school year, but replaced by new standards during the 2016-17 school year.

“If we change standards, then we have the ability to change the test as well,” Wood said.

Meanwhile, a lawsuit filed by anti-Common Core activists seeks to ensure that the state cannot use an exam developed by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) when the new standards are put in place. Regardless of the outcome in the lawsuit, the state is reportedly on the hook to pay the SBAC $4.2 million to use the test next school year.

**School grades and teacher tenure**
On the Senate side, several school-related bills have been pre-filed that bring up once again efforts that have either failed in past years or were part of bills, like last year’s wide-ranging transfer bill, that were vetoed.

Republican Ed Emery from Lamar has introduced three bills that deal, separately and together, with teacher employment and grading individual school buildings on a scale of A through F.

The tenure provisions in SB27 would abolish tenure for any teachers hired after Aug. 28, 2015, and mandate annual performance evaluations for all teachers and administrators in public schools. Starting July 1, 2016, districts would have to use salary schedules based on
The provisions are similar to those in a constitutional amendment that was soundly defeated in November. Backers of the amendment withdrew their support several weeks before the election, saying they needed more time to get their message across. But, Emery said in an interview, he does not think the lopsided loss for the amendment really reflects what Missourians think about tenure. Instead, he said, he thinks the opposition was led by those who would be affected the most -- teachers.

Part of SB27, but also the subject of a separate bill, SB28, is Emery’s call for a “simplified annual school report card” that would grade schools on a rating of A through F. Scores for individual schools on the state’s annual evaluation system, MSIP5, are already available on the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education website.

But Emery said that having to go there and do the calculations, converting the percentage score to a grade, is not as convenient or as effective as having the letter grade available from the state.

In other states, he added, the A-F grading plan has helped get parents and others more involved in education by letting them either praise or question what their local school is doing.

"It helps move us toward excellence," he said. "If translating numbers to a letter grade can help someone easily assess how their school is doing compared to other schools, I can't see the harm in that."

Emery’s SB29 deals with how teachers can be let go when courses are dropped or districts have to reduce their workforce.

Emery has also introduced the “campus free expression act,” SB93, that would designate outdoor areas on the campuses of Missouri’s public colleges and universities as traditional public forums where views could be expressed in a lawful manner.

**Promotion in urban schools**

Sen. Jamilah Nasheed, D-St. Louis, has submitted SB161, dealing with two topics: anti-bullying policies and student promotion.

The first would establish policies against bullying, require that they be enforced equally and instruct counselors on how to deal with the practice.
The second is designed to make sure that public school students in St. Louis and Kansas City achieve proficiency in reading and are not promoted beyond the second grade until they have done so. Students who have not made adequate progress would be required to get additional help.

**State board and domestic violence**

In addition to her bill on school transfers, Chappelle-Nadal has pre-filed two other pieces of legislation related to schools.

One, **SB84**, limits members of the state board of education to two terms which last for eight years each.

The other, **SB61**, is designed “to provide students with the knowledge, skills, and information to prevent and respond to teen dating violence.” Schools would develop an age-appropriate curriculum to let students know about the physical and mental harm that could result from domestic violence.

**The governor and the curators**

Finally, there is a three-sentence bill pre-filed by Sen. Kurt Schaefer. The Republican is from Columbia, home of the University of Missouri’s system headquarters and its flagship campus, so whatever the university does has a big impact on the area. This proposed legislation would also have a big impact on Gov. Jay Nixon, who has a little more than two years to go in his term, as well as his successors in that office.

Schaefer’s **SB110** reads in its entirety:

“This act prohibits any member of the University of Missouri Board of Curators from voting to appoint to, hire, or employ in any way in any position in the university any person who appointed him or her to the board. Any such vote taken by a curator will be null and void. Any curator who violates this prohibition will immediately forfeit his or her curator position.”

Translation: Since Nixon has appointed all sitting members of the board, and will have three vacancies to fill in the upcoming months, if Schaefer’s legislation passes, the curators could not vote to hire him as president or general counsel for the university system. He would be eligible to take any other position, since those jobs are hired by the president, not the curators.

In an interview, Schaefer said the bill isn’t aimed just at Nixon but at any potential quid pro quo in the future, where a governor could name members to the board in exchange for the
promise of a future job. The bill could bring more transparency to the process, he said, plus isolate curators from any pressure to hire the person who named them to the board.

“Governors have complete control over who they appoint to board of curators,” Schaefer said. “There have been concerns in the past about placing people on the board of curators in exchange for essentially a position later at the university.”

With the cycle of six-year terms for curators and four-year terms for governors, Schaefer noted, the bill would not mean a lifetime ban on a top university job but only a temporary one, until the makeup of the board changes.

Schaefer has criticized Nixon on several fronts, from the governor’s use of a state airplane to the expansion of Medicaid. And, the senator has declared his candidacy for Nixon’s old job of attorney general in the 2016 election, when term limits will force his departure from the General Assembly.

ANALYSIS
Missouri lawmakers uncertain about budget powers

By DAVID A. LIEB The Associated Press

JEFFERSON CITY — Missouri voters recently gave lawmakers more power over state spending decisions. Yet there’s uncertainty at the Missouri Capitol over whether it’s OK for lawmakers to actually start using those new powers.

When the Missouri General Assembly convenes Jan. 7, one of the things lawmakers will have to decide is whether they want to try to invoke a new constitutional provision to overturn some of the roughly $700 million of spending restrictions imposed by Gov. Jay Nixon.

Some lawmakers are willing to do so. Others don’t think they legally can.
“I think it’s an open question,” acknowledged Rep. Todd Richardson, who sponsored the constitutional amendment.

The uncertainty stems from the sequence of events that unfolded in 2014.

Lawmakers who were frustrated about Nixon’s previous budget cuts proposed a constitutional amendment asking voters to give them the ability to override gubernatorial spending restrictions by a two-thirds vote of both chambers. The House passed the measure in February, and the Senate followed suit in May, referring the measure to the general election ballot.

In June, Nixon announced $276 million of line-item vetoes and an additional $846 million of spending restrictions for the 2015 budget that began July 1. He cited concerns about declining revenue and the potential for tax breaks to further drain the state’s finances.

Lawmakers in September overrode $53 million of those line-item vetoes, but Nixon quickly placed a spending freeze on the items that continued to block them from going forward. Although he released some funding that he had previously withheld, Nixon continued to freeze about $700 million of budgeted expenditures.

Constitutional Amendment 10 won voter approval in November and officially took effect in early December. It requires the governor to send a proclamation to the legislature whenever he withholds any budgeted expenditures. Legislators can then vote to override the spending restrictions.

If Nixon were to announce spending restrictions today, lawmakers clearly could use their new constitutional powers. What is less clear is whether lawmakers can cite the new constitutional provision to overturn the spending restrictions Nixon announced in the summer, before voters approved the amendment.

State Rep. Tom Flanigan, a Republican from Carthage who is expected to become House budget chairman in January, doesn’t believe so.

“As I see it, it’s just going forward — it’s not a retroactive piece of legislation,” Flanigan said.

Richardson, who is to become House majority leader in 2015, also has some doubts. He said his intention was for the amendment to be “forward-looking.” Richardson noted that Nixon didn’t deliver a proclamation to lawmakers when he originally announced the spending cuts because it wasn’t a requirement at the time.

“The operative question is whether that proclamation is necessary for the legislature to act” to override the spending restrictions, said Richardson, a Republican attorney from Poplar Bluff.

“Frankly, there’s some fairly compelling views that we can, but I also think there’s some legitimate concerns that we can’t.”

Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Kurt Schaefer is among those who believe lawmakers can reverse Nixon’s spending restrictions. He views the budget cuts not as a past action but as an ongoing one. “If the governor is continuing to withhold, then he is subject to an override by the legislature under Amendment 10 to release that money,” said Schaefer, a Republican attorney from Columbia.

Similar reasoning was cited by Joshua Hawley, an associate law professor at the University of Missouri who focuses on constitutional law. Because Nixon has continued to impose the spending restrictions after passage of the constitutional amendment, “it is a live action,” and Nixon now could be required to submit a proclamation to legislators about the spending restrictions, he said.
WHAT OTHERS SAY: Higher education is important, but its methods are obsolete and expensive

Tuesday, December 30, 2014 | 6:00 a.m. CST
BY SCOTTSBLUFF, NEBRASKA, STAR-HERALD

NO MU MENTION

For most of us in the working world, deciding to buy a new car and take four years off without pay on the same day would qualify as insanity.

Yet that's the reality for modern college students, who accumulate average student-loan debt of $33,000, up about 30 percent in the past five years, before embarking on their professional careers.

About 1.7 million students graduated with a bachelor's degree this year and waded into an economy crowded with late-career baby boomers, laid-off mid-career workers struggling to rebuild lives after the recession and other young adults still seeking a foothold in a slowly rebounding economy.

For nearly half of employed graduates in their mid- to late-20s, the job they hold doesn't require a bachelor's degree. Unlike students of the 1960s and 1970s who could pay for college with a combination of a scholarship and summer or part-time work, they don't achieve financial independence for years. Many of them still live with parents, postponing home-buying and saving for retirement.

That doesn't mean there's no value in a college education. Lifetime earnings for most college graduates, even those who change careers, are significantly higher than for high school graduates. In fact, many career options are closed to anyone without some sort of advanced education beyond high school.
Many employers will attest that even college graduates often aren't fully prepared for the tasks they're expected to do. That's in part because some of them weren't well prepared before they went to college. Others are slow to wise up to life's realities.

They struggle to catch up after starting families too soon or waiting too long to settle on a career path. It doesn't help that the workplace is changing rapidly and training has become an ongoing component of working life.

In many fields, the digital revolution has altered the longstanding landscape. Information that used to be delivered on paper, including newspapers and magazines, has migrated to the Internet.

Digital technology has brought obsolescence to many products, such as cameras, typewriters, tape recorders and fax machines. Many industries are struggling with 20th century business models in a 21st century economy, including education.

Change is in the works. High school students can now earn college credits before they graduate. Distance learning brings big-city opportunities to small-town classrooms.

Career academies cultivate connections among students, their life interests and professionals in related fields. For those already out of school, lifelong learning is becoming more than a slogan.

In the real world, skills matter more than how they were acquired. If you can't do the work, you can't hold a job. Few people stay with one employer, or even in one field, for an entire career.

It's probably just a matter of time before society abandons the notion of sequestering students in four-year colleges and expecting them to emerge as productive cogs in the nation's corporate machinery.

They can't learn more than the basics of many fields, and they can't afford to give up four or five years of income while accumulating six-figure debt.

And taxpayers who are displaced or downsized by digital technology wonder why the cost of their children's higher education keeps climbing, why one well-qualified professor couldn't teach thousands of students at far less cost per student, via high-tech classrooms, and why textbooks can't be free, online and included in the cost of tuition.
The classroom of the future likely won't be a classroom at all, but a personalized program directed in part by the student and in part by employers, blending career needs with individual interests and ambitions.

If schools have become places where teachers "teach to the test," the next questions become, "Why can't anyone take the test? Why can't I take it on my schedule? Why can't I attend only the classes I need, from whatever institution I choose? In fact, why should I have to have a college's overpriced blessing in order to get a degree?"

Given our nation's challenges with illiteracy, dropouts, single mothers, career changes and the growing demand for lifelong learning, it makes sense to build more flexibility and self-direction into the process, including the ability to step between education and work as often as necessary to broaden and increase various work and life skills.

That won't necessarily mean an end to traditional colleges, but it might force them to adapt to student and business needs, to loosen their financial chokehold on undergraduates and, you'd hope, to make a traditional college degree just another paper artifact in a rapidly evolving world economy.

*Copyright Scottsbluff, Nebraska, Star-Herald. Distributed by the Associated Press.*