MU rolls out voluntary buyout for academic administrators

Sunday, January 11, 2015 | 4:29 p.m. CST
BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

COLUMBIA — MU is offering a buyout option for some of its academic administrators.

The Columbia Daily Tribune reports that 28 administrators are eligible out of 48 total academic administrators, including deans and the provost. To receive the buyout, the administrators must be retirement eligible and turn 62 by Aug, 31, 2015. Participants will receive a one-time payment of 1 1/2 times their base salary, not to exceed $200,000. MU spokeswoman Mary Jo Banken said eligible employees received letters Thursday about the program. Applications are due March 2.

The university previously offered a buyout option for some of its tenured faculty members, and 110 people were approved. The earlier buyout was credited with freeing up about $17 million in budgeted salaries and benefits.
The University of Missouri rolled out a voluntary buyout program this week for 28 eligible academic administrators who also are tenured faculty members.

The eligible employees received letters about the Voluntary Separation Program on Thursday, MU spokeswoman Mary Jo Banken said in an email.

The buyout for these administrators has the same requirements as the buyout program announced for faculty members in September. Those eligible for the program must be academic administrators as of Sept. 1, 2014, be at least 62 and retirement-eligible by Aug. 31, 2015, according to a letter from MU Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin that went out to academic administrators.

Of the 261 eligible faculty members, 110 professors chose to take the payout at a cost of about $17.7 million between Dec. 31 and Aug. 31, 2015. The university said the buyout saved about $17 million in salary and benefits. That money will go to hiring new faculty. The university has 2,184 faculty and instructors total.

The 28 eligible administrators are out of 48 total academic administrators, including deans and the provost, among others in academic roles.

Those who participate in the buyout will receive a one-time payout between May 1 and Aug. 31. The payout is 1.5 times the base salary, not exceeding $200,000, which mirrors the terms for faculty.

“This program recognizes the significant contributions made by these academic administrators during their time with the university,” Loftin said in the letter to administrators. “It helps the university manage in a challenging financial environment by providing budget flexibility for funding new positions and appropriate salary increases.”

Applications are due March 2.
Mike O’Brien, dean of the MU College of Arts and Sciences, said the fact the program is the same for administrators as faculty makes sense.

“They’re faculty first,” he said. “You’re faculty before you’re an administrator, so I can’t imagine why it would be different.”

When asked about his own intentions with the voluntary buyout, O’Brien said, “I love what I’m doing and I can’t imagine doing anything else.”

When Loftin announced the first voluntary buyout program in the fall, he described it as an “opportunity to manage a challenging financial environment by providing flexibility for funding new positions and granting appropriate salary increases.”

University sexual discrimination cases may use lower burden of evidence

By Ashley Jost

Sunday, January 11, 2015 at 12:00 am

**When the University of Missouri Faculty Council heard about the drafted procedures for handling cases of professors being accused of sexual discrimination under Title IX, they were told the trial-like hearing to decide whether a violation occurred would use a “preponderance of evidence” as the burden of proof.**

For most people, including many in the faculty, the phrase was just legal jargon with little meaning. But it has a real effect on the outcome of future university cases involving claims of sexual discrimination, harassment and violence.

Marsha Fischer, the UM System lawyer who helped explain the new procedure to faculty, said the standard is used often in civil cases and in civil rights issues, and is different from “reasonable doubt,” the standard used in criminal cases.

“But, these are not criminal cases,” Fischer said. The cases in question are internal proceedings, separate from any criminal prosecution that might arise. Those proceedings are part of new rules
on Title IX the university is working on in the midst of a greater national awareness of sexual violence on college campuses, in part after high-profile cases out of MU caught media attention.

Preponderance of evidence is a burden of proof that means the decision is made in favor of the person the jury or judge believes by at least 50.01 percent, associate MU law professor Ben Trachtenberg said.

A jury or judge using reasonable doubt decides whether a reasonable person would find no doubt about how the case should be decided — there’s a “moral certainty” about whether a violation took place, Trachtenberg said.

When the Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights issued letters and follow-up documents about Title IX, a federal law barring all types of sexual discrimination on campus, in April 2014, the office made it clear that preponderance of evidence is the expected standard for colleges to use.

When UM System lawyers, faculty members from the four campuses and the university’s hired consultants wrote the policy, they heeded that guidance.

“Sometimes there is a knee-jerk reaction where people think, ‘Oh, I don’t think preponderance of evidence is serious enough for a guy being accused of, say, rape,’ ” Trachtenberg said. “I get that. People think of it as a criminal situation.”

Trachtenberg said he doesn’t think there’s a problem with using this standard in the university’s proceedings to determine whether a Title IX violation took place, as long as there is decent evidence.

“The question about what will be used as evidence is getting lost in the standard-of-proof discussion,” he said. “In a real court, the accused and the person who is accusing would be vigorously questioned by a lawyer, including their own, and then they would be cross examined. But we don’t do that in university hearings because we’re concerned about trampling on the victim.”

In the proposed rule change, the accused and the accuser each would be allowed an adviser, but that adviser doesn’t speak before the appointed three-person panel of faculty, administrators and staff that decide whether a violation occurred. The panel is one of multiple options to resolve the internal cases.

The system-wide policies still are being finalized before the Board of Curators votes on them at its Feb. 5-6 meeting. After that, each campus has the opportunity to create its own rules on how the hearings can proceed, including what evidence will be permissible. Trachtenberg said the best evidence will ultimately be witness testimony.

“Even though people might not articulate it that way, the concern is the combination of a lesser standard of proof with less actual proof,” he said.
Fischer said though formal rules of evidence don’t apply as they would in a state or federal court, the hearing panels still are “making a determination of relevant and reliable information,” including the testimony from the accused and the alleged victim, as well as from the university investigator who is initially charged with looking into the case.

The consequence for accused faculty members varies based on the violation, but could include suspension without pay or job loss.

**iPhone separation anxiety: Heart beats faster, mind works slower**

Losing an expensive piece of digital equipment loaded with photos, contacts and personal information is stressful, that's for sure. But having yours placed just slightly out of reach shouldn't be so bad, right?

Quite the contrary, say researchers at the University of Missouri, who found that taking away study participants' iPhones caused a measurable stress reaction and led to them perform poorly on simple cognitive tasks.

Russell Clayton, a doctoral candidate at the University's school of journalism, hooked 40 iPhone users up to a blood pressure and heart rate monitor and presented them with a simple word search puzzle.

Half did the word search with their trusty phones nearby and then later repeated the task. The second time, however, Clayton's team claimed the phones were causing Bluetooth interference with the monitors and moved them to the other side of the room, out of reach but within earshot. The other half did the same thing in reverse.

While the participants were busy working sans cell on the puzzle, the researchers dialed their numbers from a phone in the lab. After the ringing subsided, measurements showed that the participants were significantly more anxious while separated from their phones, had higher heart rate and blood pressure and did worse on the word game.

The findings add a new level to nomophobia, the term that popped up a few years ago for the fear of being without your mobile phone. And even though it might be understandable that people feel anxious when they can't answer what could be an important phone call (especially in an age where phones are used less and less for verbal communication), letting it go to voicemail shouldn't send one's pulse racing.

"Our findings suggest that iPhone separation can negatively impact performance on mental tasks," said Clayton. "Additionally, the results from our study suggest that iPhones are capable of
becoming an extension of our selves such that when separated, we experience a lessening of 'self' and a negative physiological state."

Add a diminished sense of self to the list of cell phone side effects that already includes digital addiction, eye strain, back pain and sleep deprivation.

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**iPhone Separation Anxiety Is Real, Study Says**

You might think you're doing yourself a favor if you leave your phone behind when you head to an important meeting or dinner with the in-laws, but a new study suggests just the opposite is true.

According to new research from the University of Missouri, being separated from your iPhone can lead to "physiological anxiety" and "poor cognitive performance."

The study, "The Extended iSelf: The Impact of iPhone Separation on Cognition, Emotion, and Physiology," was published online Thursday in the Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication. Researchers recruited a total of 40 iPhone-using participants from three journalism courses at a "large university" in the Midwest. (iPhones were selected because it's easy to disable the device's "silent mode," researchers wrote.) Then, they ran a couple of experiments.

First, participants were told to sit in a cubicle and complete a puzzle while in possession of their phone; then, they were asked to complete another puzzle, but they were told that their phone was causing "Bluetooth interference" and that it needed to be moved elsewhere in the room. Researchers then called the phone -- study participants could see and hear it ringing, but were unable to get up to answer it.

In each scenario, researchers kept track of participants' heart rate and blood pressure.

You can probably see where this is going: When the puzzle-solvers were separated from their phones but able to see and hear them ringing, they experienced "significant" upticks in anxiety, heart rate and blood pressure. They also got worse at completing the puzzle.
In a news release, the researchers suggested that "iPhone users avoid parting with their phones during daily situations that involve a great deal of attention," saying that being apart from the device can make individuals feel "a lessening of 'self.'"

Of course, the argument could be made that the study might reveal less about "phone separation" anxiety than it does about how anxious people feel when their phone is ringing and they can't answer it. Researchers did not call participants' phones when they were able to access them, which may have clarified which element of the experiment made individuals anxious.

Russell Clayton, a University of Missouri doctoral candidate who worked on the study, freely acknowledges this limitation. But, he noted to The Huffington Post that he's confident in his findings: Participants who were separated from their ringing phones experienced negative outcomes.

So, what should you do if you own a smartphone but need to focus?

"Our advice would be to carry your iPhone with you," Clayton told HuffPost, "but to silence your phone during cognitively demanding tasks (i.e., work, meetings, exams, etc) in order to avoid any potential distractions that may reduce your attention throughout the day."

**THE TIMES OF INDIA**

**Separation from mobile causes anxiety**

WASHINGTON: Separation from the cellphone can have serious psychological and physiological effects on iPhone users, including poor performance in cognitive tests, a study has found. Researchers from the University of Missouri suggest that iPhone users should avoid parting with their phones during situations that require focused attention, such as taking tests, attending conferences or meetings, or completing important work assignments, as it could result in poorer cognitive performance in those tasks.

"Our findings suggest that iPhone separation can negatively impact performance on mental tasks," said Russell Clayton, a doctoral candidate at the MU School of Journalism and lead author of the study. "The results from our study suggest that iPhones are capable of becoming an extension of ourselves such that when separated, we experience a lessening of 'self' and a negative physiological state," said Clayton.

Clayton, along with Glenn Leshner, former professor at MU, now at the University of Oklahoma, and Anthony Almond, doctoral student at Indiana University-Bloomington, found that when users were unable to answer their ringing iPhones while solving simple word search puzzles, their heart rates and blood pressure levels increased, as did feelings of anxiety and unpleasantness. Also, performance (number of words found on word search puzzles) decreased as compared to when iPhone users completed similar word search puzzles while in possession of their iPhones, researchers said. The researchers asked iPhone users to sit at a computer cubicle in
a media psychology lab. Participants completed the first word search puzzle with their iPhones in their possession. For the second, they were told their iPhones were causing "Bluetooth interference" and that they needed to be placed further away in the room for the remainder of the experiment.

Researchers also called the phones while the participants attempted the second puzzle. and the second puzzle without iPhone in their possession or vice versa while the researchers monitored their heart rates and blood pressure levels. While completing the first puzzle, researchers recorded participants' heart rate and blood pressure responses. The blood pressure and heart rates of the participants were monitored during both the puzzles.

They also reported their levels of anxiety and how unpleasant they felt during each puzzle. Researchers found a significant rise in anxiety, heart rate and blood pressure levels, and a significant decrease in puzzle performance when the participants were separated from their iPhones as compared to their previous attempts. When users completed similar word search puzzles while in possession of their iPhones. The study was published in the Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication.

Any type of pet may improve social skills of child with autism

By FRAN WEBBER MU News Bureau

Friday, January 9, 2015 at 2:00 pm

Dogs and other pets play an important role in individuals’ social lives, and they can act as catalysts for social interaction.

Although much media attention has focused on how dogs can improve the social skills of children with autism, a University of Missouri researcher recently found that children with autism have stronger social skills when any kind of pet lived in the home.

“When I compared the social skills of children with autism who lived with dogs to those who did not, the children with dogs appeared to have greater social skills,” said Gretchen Carlisle, research fellow at the Research Center for Human-Animal Interaction at the MU College of Veterinary Medicine.
“More significantly, however, the data revealed that children with any kind of pet in the home reported being more likely to engage in behaviors such as introducing themselves, asking for information or responding to other people’s questions. These kinds of social skills typically are difficult for kids with autism, but this study showed children’s assertiveness was greater if they lived with a pet.”

Pets often serve as “social lubricants,” Carlisle said.

When pets are present in social settings or a classroom, children talk and engage more with one another.

This effect also seems to apply to children with autism and could account for their increased assertiveness when the children are living in a home with pets, Carlisle said.

“When children with disabilities take their service dogs out in public, other kids stop and engage,” Carlisle said. “Kids with autism don’t always readily engage with others, but if there’s a pet in the home that the child is bonded with and a visitor starts asking about the pet, the child may be more likely to respond.”

Carlisle also found that children’s social skills increased the longer a family had owned a dog, yet older children rated their relationships with their dogs as weaker.

When children were asked, they reported the strongest attachments to smaller dogs, Carlisle found.

“Finding children with autism to be more strongly bonded to smaller dogs, and parents reporting strong attachments between their children and other pets, such as rabbits or cats, serves as evidence that other types of pets could benefit children with autism as well,” Carlisle said.

Carlisle surveyed 70 families who had children with autism between the ages of 8 and 18.

The children were patients at the MU Thompson Center for Autism and Neurodevelopmental Disorders.

Almost 70 percent of the families that participated had dogs, and about half of the families had cats. Other pets owned by participants included fish, farm animals, rodents, rabbits, reptiles, a bird and even one spider.

“Dogs are good for some kids with autism but might not be the best option for every child,” Carlisle said. “Kids with autism are highly individual and unique, so some other animals may provide just as much benefit as dogs. Though parents may assume having dogs are best to help their children, my data show greater social skills for children with autism who live in homes with any type of pet.”
Psychological effects of pets are profound

By Sy Montgomery Globe Correspondent  January 12, 2015

I once faced a sickening defeat. After a day and a half of an intensive scuba class, diving too deep, too fast produced pressure in my ears, causing dizziness and nausea. I was forced to quit. Next, I realized I was too vertiginous to drive home.

Despairing, I lay down on the blanket that protects our car’s upholstery from our border collie’s dirty paws. As I inhaled Sally’s scent, calm washed over me. Within a half hour, the dizziness eased enough for me to drive.

We animal lovers have long known that, no matter what life may bring — sickness, sadness, or radiant health — pets make us feel better. Numerous studies have documented astonishingly wide-ranging effects. Cat owners enjoy a 30 percent reduction in heart attack risk. Watching swimming fish lowers blood pressure. Stroking a dog boosts the immune system. Now researchers can explain the source of our companion animals’ healing powers: Our pets profoundly change the biochemistry of our brains.

“This is science that supports a truth the heart has always known,” Meg Olmert writes in her book “Made for Each Other,” a synthesis of more than 20 years of work on the biology of the human-animal bond. She singles out one neuropeptide: oxytocin, a brain chemical long known to promote maternal care in mammals.

Oxytocin levels rise in a mother’s brain as she goes into labor, and produces the contractions that deliver the baby. Once her infant is born, just the sight, smell, or thought of the baby is enough to trigger milk letdown (a fact that has caused many a new mother to ruin a blouse.) Humans have known for millennia that this affects animal mothers, too: Ancient Egyptian tomb art shows a kneeling man milking a cow with her calf tethered to her front leg.

But oxytocin’s powers are not, as once thought, limited to mothering or triggered only by labor. Nor is it confined to females, to mammals, or even to vertebrates. Even octopuses — who not only lack breasts, but die when their eggs hatch — have a form of oxytocin called cephalotocin.

Oxytocin causes a cascade of physiological changes. It can slow heart rate and breathing, quiet blood pressure and inhibit the production of stress hormones, creating a profound sense of calm, comfort, and focus. And these conditions are critical to forming close social relationships —
whether with an infant, a mate, or unrelated individuals — including, importantly, individuals belonging to different species.

In a study published in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences last June, Japanese researchers sprayed either oxytocin or saline solution into the nostrils of dogs, who then reunited with their owners. The owners were told not to interact with their dogs, but those whose pets inhaled oxytocin found them impossible to ignore. Statistical analysis showed the oxytocin inhalers were far more likely to stare, sniff, lick, and paw at their people than those who had saline solution.

Oxytocin is not the only neurotransmitter companion animals call forth from our brains. South African researchers showed that when men and women stroked and spoke with their dogs, as well as doubling the people’s blood levels of oxytocin, the interaction boosted levels of beta endorphins — natural painkillers associated with “runners high” — and dopamine, known widely as the “reward” hormone. These neurochemicals, too, are essential to our sense of well-being. **A later and larger study by University of Missouri scientists also documented that petting dogs caused a spike in people’s serotonin, the neurotransmitter that most antidepressants attempt to elevate.**

So it’s no wonder that pet-assisted therapies help troubled children, people with autism, and those suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and drug addiction. Pets help normalize brain chemistry.

“By showing how interacting with pets actually works,” says the Missouri study’s lead author, Dr. Rebecca Johnson, “we can help animal-assisted therapy become a medically accepted intervention” — one that could be prescribed like medicine and reimbursed by insurance.

All animals appear to have cells directly under the skin that activate oxytocin in the brain. So gentle touch — from grooming your horse’s coat to making love with your spouse — is a powerful trigger. But so is simply thinking about someone you love, whether it’s a person or a pet. And in fact, a small study published this fall at Massachusetts General Hospital found that MRI scans of women’s brains lit up in the same areas when shown pictures of their pets as when shown pictures of their children.

But here’s the best part: It’s mutual. We effect the same physiological changes in our pets as they do in us. As I lay on that blanket in our car, soothed by Sally’s scent, I remembered how my best human friend, Liz Thomas — whose column you will read next week — once quelled desperation and fear in another border collie named Tess, Sally’s beloved predecessor. I was away tending to my dying mother when Tess, a rescue with separation anxiety, suffered a stroke-like illness. For the first time in her life, she was confined overnight at the vet’s. Liz knew just how to help. She came to our house, retrieved my barn coat, and took it to Tess’s hospital cage. Tess inhaled my scent and instantly, her ears folded and the terror fell from her face. She let out a sigh and relaxed.
Nicotine bans, health incentives highlight tension between company cost-saving and employee privacy

By Alicia Stice

Saturday, January 10, 2015 at 12:00 am

The decision to quit smoking is often difficult, but for prospective employees at large health care organizations, it is increasingly mandatory.

At the start of the month, MU Health Care implemented its nicotine-free hiring policy, and Boone Hospital Center marked the one-year anniversary of its identical restrictions. The policies mean anyone looking for a job at either institution needs to be nicotine — not just tobacco — free.

Although Missouri law prohibits refusing to hire people because they use tobacco products when they are off the premises and off the clock, it exempts religious and church-operated organizations as well as not-for-profit organizations “whose principal business is health care promotion.” That exception has allowed multiple health systems in the state, including those in Columbia, to implement the nicotine-free hiring practices.

Missouri Department of Labor spokesman Tom Bastion said in an email that it was “up to the courts to determine whether or not an organization is included in the exemptions.”

The policies offer employers a chance to reduce health care costs and present a good face to the public. But they also pose a challenge for people addicted to nicotine who want jobs within those health care systems. Opponents say the restrictions take several steps too far into the personal lives of prospective hires, while advocates argue that they create a healthier workforce and encourage people to make positive changes in their lives.

For people looking for jobs at MU Health Care or Boone Hospital Center, the nicotine-free hiring policies mean when they take a pre-employment drug screening they are tested for nicotine use in addition to illegal substances. Anyone who smokes traditional cigarettes or uses chewing tobacco would be eliminated. But because the tests do not differentiate between sources
of nicotine, people using products such as e-cigarettes, nicotine patches or gum face elimination like traditional tobacco users.

“We recognized ... that trying to enforce the policy would mean being able to test for it,” said Kevin Everett, a University of Missouri associate professor who helped develop MU Health’s policy. That the tests remove the job possibility for people using nicotine aids to quit until they can wean themselves off the addictive substance is an unfortunate side effect, he said.

He also pointed out that employees who smoke can cost employers thousands of extra dollars every year in additional sick leave and higher health care costs. He pointed to a 2012 study that estimated employees who smoke cost employers about $5,800 extra every year. This figure accounts for extra sick time, smoke breaks and pension costs.

“There’s definitely been an increased focus at” MU Health “and I think large employers across the country are figuring out the best strategy to improve health and well-being for employees,” Everett said.

MU Health spokeswoman Mary Jenkins said the organization’s nicotine policy falls in line with its broader focus on healthy living and was a natural progression of its existing policies, which had already banned smoking on the premise.

“Our patients and families are our first priority, and we realize that it may be an issue. ... We realize this policy has a potential impact on individuals’ choice and employment, but we feel we have an obligation to set an example for our community,” she said.

In some ways, nicotine-free hiring policies are the next step in wellness efforts employers have pushed for decades. In addition to its nicotine-free hiring policy, MU Health runs a host of other programs designed to get its employees healthy.

MU Health now encourages employees to participate in a steps challenge, in which they track how many steps they take each week, and rewards teams that meet their goals with drawings for prizes such as football tickets, flat-screen TVs and extra vacation days. Employees can also participate in a weight loss challenge, with the person who loses the highest percentage of weight winning a $2,500 travel voucher. MU Health also uses incentives to get current employees who use tobacco to quit.

“We, along with other employers, are looking for ways to build healthier workforces,” Jenkins said.

Encouraging employees to exercise and lose weight can reduce the number of sick days people take and can be used as a bargaining chip when negotiating insurance costs. Large-scale efforts aimed at reducing the number of employees who use tobacco products can do the same.
Michelle Zvanut, Boone Hospital Center’s vice president of human relations, said the organization implemented the policy to create a healthier workforce.

“We also know that tobacco use contributes to high medical claim costs, and we’re trying to control the medical claim costs, our insurance,” she said.

Zvanut said because the policy has only been in place for a year, it is difficult to say how effective it has been at reducing health care premiums. She does not have the number of affected job applicants because people who use nicotine can end the application process themselves when they find out about the policy.

In an email, UM System spokesman John Fougere said the university system does not track health insurance costs by entity, and premiums are set across all campuses.

“However, we want to encourage all faculty and staff to practice healthy behaviors, and the campuses have various strategies such as cessation programs, smoke-free campus rules and MUHC hiring practices to support this,” he wrote.

These policies also give image-conscious health care providers the chance to boast of a healthier workforce while saving money. Proponents of nicotine-free hiring policies argue that they are simply an extension of existing wellness programs, while opponents argue they are a violation of employee rights.

“Some people probably like the policy because they don’t like seeing hospital employees walking around the mall Saturday afternoon with cigarettes hanging out of their mouths,” National Workrights Institute President Lew Maltby said. “Whether the policy will be good PR overall is hard to tell. What’s clear is that it’s not right.”

The New Jersey-based organization is an offshoot of the ACLU and has pushed back against nicotine-free hiring policies for years.

Columbia is not the only place where prospective employees face similar restrictions. Although many health care companies and hospitals have simply banned the use of tobacco products on their premises, a growing number have broadened the policies to encompass any use of the products, regardless of when and where people use them.

In Springfield, CoxHealth implemented a nicotine-free hiring policy last year. SSM hospitals in the St. Louis area and St. Francis Medical Center in Cape Girardeau instituted similar policies in 2011, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported. Truman Medical Center in Kansas City took its tobacco-free workplace environment a step further, extending the no-smoking policy to people who already worked there. Current employees also have access to cessation resources.

Employees who already worked at MU Health Care and Boone Hospital were exempt from the policies.
“Twenty percent of Americans smoke,” Maltby said. “That means 1 out of 5 times the most qualified person” for the job “is going to be a smoker.”

He said should someone decide to sue either MU Health or Boone Hospital over the policy, the lawsuit would come down to whether the organizations’ primary purpose was “health care promotion,” which he thinks is different from providing health care.

“I know why that language is there in general, and it’s for organizations like the American Cancer Society,” he said. “An organization whose primary business is to try to get people to live healthy has a legitimate reason not to hire someone who smokes. ... If you’re in a business, an organization, that’s trying to tell people not to smoke, you can’t expect them to hire a smoker and then go out and tell people they shouldn’t smoke. A hospital is in the business of providing health care. It’s not in the business of promoting health care.”

Jenkins said at MU Health the nicotine policy plays a crucial role in the organization’s mission, especially when it comes to helping patients get healthy.

“We believe that as a leading academic medical center we need to lead by example,” she said. “With the health and well-being of our patients as our first priority, research tells us support and assistance from nurses and other health care providers can play a critical role in an individual’s success in quitting nicotine.”

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

UPDATE: Annual symposium shows benefits of sustainable farming

Friday, January 9, 2015 | 6:41 p.m. CST; updated 6:41 p.m. CST, Saturday, January 10, 2015

BY MATT MCCORMACK

*CORRECTIONS and CLARIFICATION: This story has been updated to reflect clarifications and corrections. An earlier version of this article neglected to mention Joanna Reuter as co-owner of Chert Hollow Farm along with her husband, Eric. The couple’s farm is less than 10 acres and is primarily a vegetable farm that implements some agroforestry practices. The Reuters both hold graduate degrees and have professional experience in their field. The couple also raises goats in addition to the other livestock on the farm.
COLUMBIA — For the first time this year, landowners and farmers played a major role in MU’s agroforestry symposium, sharing their experiences using climate-smart methods to enrich their soil and prevent erosion.

Agroforestry is a land use management system that integrates trees and shrubs into crop and animal farming systems to create environmental, economic and social benefits. The agricultural landscape is changing as the climate has become less predictable, and land across the Midwest is being degraded by modern farming practices.

About 100 people attended the Thursday symposium in Jesse Wrench Auditorium in the Memorial Union at MU.

Landowner and guest speaker John Buchanan, a farmer from Valley Falls, Kansas, said it was his wife who first became interested in agroforestry when he began to practice sustainable farming.

"We planted the trees on what used to be a soybean field, and every tree has a number and GPS location," Buchanan said.

The GPS tag is linked to a computer program that allows Buchanan to monitor each tree, view the pH levels in the soil of each tree and track growth changes.

Buchanan said his efforts to restore his land after years of traditional row farming have been well rewarded. White oak, red oak, bur oak and pecan trees are plotted out on his 1,100 acres. The trees’ deep roots help aerate the soil, absorb water and reduce erosion by blocking the wind.

"I've been a full-time farmer all my life, and this has been one of the best experiments I've ever tried with actually restoring the land," he said.

Landowner and guest speaker Mark Shepard said using agroforestry takes patience, but in the end is rewarding and costs less.

"We've formulated our farm equipment to run on vegetable oil that we produce, and we let the sheep do the brush control," he said. "With the trees, you're going to maintain the plants for the first few years, but then they start fending for themselves."

Quality lost in modern practices
Speaker Thomas Sauer, assistant director of the Midwest Climate Hub, said making an effort to control drainage on the land, having efficient irrigation and using agroforestry are some of the best ways to regain the quality that was lost through modern agricultural practices.

"Roughly across the Midwest, we've lost 50 percent of organic soil," Sauer said. "I think agroforestry is one of our best chances for climate change mitigation techniques."

He said it is especially important to plant trees in prairie communities where there aren't any.

Sauer said the trend of organic soil loss can be reversed with cooperation from landowners.

Eric Reuter and his wife, Joanna,* are sustainable agroforestry farmers from Harrisburg, Missouri, who own and operate Chert Hollow Farm. The couple's farm consists of less than 10 acres and is primarily a vegetable farm that implements some agroforestry practices.* Eric Reuter also spoke at the conference.

"We are *geologists by training, we look at how humans affect the erosion of land areas," Reuter said. "We believe firmly in diversity in the variability of today's climate."

Reuter takes land that was previously farmed, abandoned and cannot sustain crops and tries to restore the quality and re-establish productivity.

He talked about how he rehabilitated a useless area and is now using it as fully functional farmland where he grows produce that he sells locally.

The agroforestry methods on the farm involve clearing the land of cedar trees, planting an orchard in its place and using the cut trees for lumber (which is also sold), mulch and biochar.

Once the land is cleared, Reuter starts farming and raising:

- Hogs, chickens and goats*
- Elderberries, blueberries, gooseberries, grapes and pawpaws (all native to Missouri)

"We're basically getting value out of a thinning an overgrown forest," Reuter said.

Making a change
"We don't know what the future is going to bring, and that is part of the problem of handling agriculture," Sauer said. "Adaptation is going to happen, we're going to intensify our land use, and we're going to need more as the demand for food will grow."

Farmers themselves may continue to be an obstacle.

Jere Gilles, associate professor of rural sociology at MU, said the attitude of most farmers is not geared toward climate change or agroforestry methods.

"There is very little evidence that farmers are interested in mitigation; however, there is an interest in adaptation and resistance," he said. "Much more effort is put into avoiding losses, and what we need to do is work together to find the problems and find research."

The consensus seemed to be there aren't enough farmers participating in climate-smart agriculture. Landowners agreed about the importance of sustainability and applying eco-friendly land management to large areas of land for agriculture. It takes time, patience and altering of a mindset, but farmers such as Buchanan feel that it's worth it.

"We've always turned a profit on this ground," he said. "If you want to have a successful tree farm, you've got to be prepared, and you've got to do things right. You can't just put a tree in the ground and expect it to grow."

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**Hog Prices Fall as Herds Rebound From Virus**

By Kelsey Gee
Jan. 11, 2015 12:07 p.m. ET

U.S. hogs are trading at the lowest prices in nearly two years as herds recover from a deadly virus.

The price slide is benefiting consumers, who are paying less for ham, bacon and other pork products, while investors are betting that futures will fall even further as more hogs grow to slaughter weight in the months ahead.
The porcine epidemic diarrhea virus, or PEDv, has killed millions of pigs in the U.S. since the spring of 2013, setting off a monthslong rally in hog prices last year. But new vaccines and herd immunity have slowed the spread of the virus, and producers are rapidly replenishing their herds.

Producers began breeding more females last summer and fall, when hog prices hit near-record highs and feed costs fell to their lowest in about four years.

“Most hog producers made money every month of 2014, creating a situation where they would want to breed about as many females as they could because the outlook was positive” for profits, said Ron Plain, agricultural economist at the University of Missouri.

The results of the breeding efforts are starting to appear in the market. In the week through Jan. 10, an estimated 2.16 million hogs will have been processed for pork, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, up 3.5% from the same week last year, representing a dramatic turnaround for the industry, and for meatpackers such as Tyson Foods Inc. and Cargill Inc.

Farmers also have continued to feed hogs to record heavy weights, as they are typically paid on a per-pound basis.

The Agriculture Department forecasts U.S. pork production to climb around 4% in 2015, compared with last year.

“Hog numbers are continuing to creep up, which is expected to remain negative for prices as we see production increase,” said Dax Wedemeyer, a broker at U.S. Commodities Inc. in West Des Moines, Iowa. “I think prices could fall another two or three dollars [per hundred pounds] before settling out. There’s going to be a lot of pork this year.”

February hog futures fell 2.8% last week to 79.025 cents a pound on the Chicago Mercantile Exchange, ending near the lowest close for a front-month contract since March 2013.

Money managers, who had previously piled into the market when supplies were tight, have fled. Managers betting on higher prices still outnumber those betting against, according to the U.S. Commodity Futures Trading Commission, but the gap is the smallest since early June 2013, when industry experts, regulators, and investors were just beginning to learn about the spread of the virus.

To be sure, some industry analysts predict consumer demand for the cheaper pork products will climb, and that could buoy hog prices.

The value of most pork cuts remains significantly lower than the cost of steaks, ribs, and other beef products.

But in the meantime, “hog prices are headed lower, with many people selling the summer contracts reflecting the idea that there’s going to be more supplies come June,” said Mike Seery, president at brokerage Seery Futures in Plainfield, Ill.
Phyllis Schlafly: College Women Get Raped Because There Are Too Many Women in College

By Lindsay Toler

Last year, the University of Missouri came under fire for failing to investigate the alleged sexual assault of student athlete Sasha Menu Courey by players on the MU football team until ESPN made her story public three years after her suicide.

In 2013, an 18-year-old student didn’t know she’d been raped while intoxicated at a dorm-room party until her 21-year-old assailant started bragging about it on Saint Louis University’s campus. In 2010, four Saint Louis University basketball players were accused of "pulling a train" on a twenty-year-old victim before officials ultimately decided not to prosecute.

Here at Daily RFT, we’d call these assaults sexual violence. Phyllis Schlafly, the St. Louis native and hyper-conservative activist, would call them "sex scandals," and she knows just how to stop them:

Stop letting so many women into college.

In a predictably horrifying editorial for World Net Daily, Schlafly pontificates on a recent controversial story from the New York Times about the changing demographics of college campuses. Since at least 2000, women have made up the majority -- about 57 percent -- of enrollments at American colleges, mostly because women tend to have higher grades and drop out of school at lower rates.

The result, says the New York Times, is a social climate where women compete for a dwindling pool of eligible men. (It's basically the opposite of what happens at Missouri University of Science and Technology, which is three-quarters male and holds a hell of a St. Patrick's Day party, ladies.)

Schlafly finds this to be appalling. When there are more women than men on campus, she says, the beauty of a courtship romance gives way to grinding and gettin’ it on.

"Girls do not want to get left out in the cold, so they compete for men on men's terms," Schlafly says in her editorial. "This results in more casual hook-ups that are dead-end encounters with no future and no real romantic relationships."

With all these horny ladies competing for sex "on men's terms," how could a college lad be expected to ask for consent before sex?

"The imbalance of far more women than men at colleges has been a factor in the various sex scandals that have made news in the last couple of years," Schlafly says.

So college men would rape less if there weren't so many consensual-sex-seeking college women to prey upon? Another gem of Schlafly wisdom.

Don’t worry, though, because Schlafly also provides us with three solutions for halting the problem of women over-enrolling in college:

1. Stop letting more women enroll to colleges than men. It’s affirmative action for men!
2. Stop granting college loans. Then students would actually have to spend their time working instead of slutting it up at bars and frat houses. They could work the 48 hours per week needed to pay for their course load and then live, oh I don't know, on the streets?

3. Bring back men's sports that were cut by "an extremist feminist application of Title IX." More sports for men means more men...and less rape, apparently.

So thanks, Schlafly (who is an aunt-by-marriage, and otherwise entirely separate from, the brewery founder Tom Schlalfly), for trying, but we have a feeling that blocking women from college, financial assistance and sports won't stop men from raping them.

MU law professor Ben Trachtenberg talks to KOMU about court procedure in deciding when to adjourn for the day

Link: http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=9413dd72-1b2c-470b-90aa-b64848cff1a4

Boone County Civil War memorial omits most blacks who died in service

By Rudi Keller

Sunday, January 11, 2015 at 12:00 am

The monument to Boone County’s Civil War dead on the courthouse lawn is a gray granite slab with 149 names, both Union and Confederate, lost either in battle or to disease during the deadliest conflict in U.S. history.
But the memorial, dedicated in 2001, omits most of the soldiers who comprise the largest group that should be listed — the slaves who traded their chains for a blue Union uniform to obtain their freedom. Just a few paces away stand the columns of the 1847 courthouse, where many of those slaves and their families were auctioned in estate and foreclosure sales.

By studying records available online, the Tribune has determined that at least 122 men from Boone County who were slaves when they joined the army died while in the service. Almost all those men died of disease, which killed twice as many men as battles on both sides of the conflict.

The memorial lists just 16 of those men, along with 107 Confederates and 26 other Union soldiers.

The Boone County Historical Society committee of volunteers who conducted the research from 1996 to 2001 did not deliberately leave the black soldiers out, said Bill Berry, who chaired the effort after the death of Don Sanders. They used sources they could find locally, mainly old newspaper accounts and material compiled by Union and Confederate heritage groups, he said.

“There was no question of race,” he said. “It never came up. A federal soldier was a federal soldier.”

But for black leaders, the omission is telling. “That would not be anything new,” said Mary Ratliff, president of the Missouri NAACP. “When that is brought to our attention, it is very upsetting. Our history is not all out there for us, we have to dig for it. I was not aware of the fact that those veterans’ names had been omitted.”

The Boone County Commission approved placing the memorial and paid for a base to support it. Southern District Commissioner Karen Miller, the only current member in office at that time, said the commission would listen to suggestions from any private group willing to sponsor an additional monument.

“It obviously sounds like there is something missing,” she said.

The records that now can be checked were, at the time the work was done, available only in original form or on microfilm at National Archives records centers. The committee had no money to send anyone or hire assistance for the research, Berry said.

LeeAnn Whites, professor of history at the University of Missouri, met with the committee during their work and members told her they were concerned because they had so few Union soldiers’ names. The ratio of Confederates to Union soldiers among whites was about right for this part of the state, Whites said.

“I also suggested that if they were concerned about how few Union dead there were, I thought I knew how they could increase them,” Whites said. “I asked if they had any black Union dead and they said they did not. They did tell me that they had tried to contact people in the African-American community here, but that that had not led to much.”
Central Missouri was in the heart of Missouri’s slave-holding region. Boone County had more than 5,000 slaves when the war began, the third largest slave population in the state. “The fact that more black men died than white men is worth noting, but not just for the number, but for what it tells us about the way this place worked,” Whites said.

The Union army began accepting Missouri slaves as recruits in November 1863. By the time the war ended in 1865, more than 8,000 had enlisted, including 340 from Boone County.

Slave owners had two incentives to send their slaves to the army, said Gary Kremer, director of the State Historical Society of Missouri. “For one, that would mean that would be one fewer white person that would have to serve in the army,” Kremer said. “And the slave owner could get a $300 bounty at a time when the handwriting was on the wall that they were not going to get anything out of these slaves.”

Once in the service, most of the former slaves were sent to Arkansas and Louisiana for garrison duty, where disease took a terrible toll. Col. A.J. Edgerton of the 65th U.S. Colored Troop Infantry, commander of a brigade that included the 62nd and 67th USCT Infantry regiments, wrote in December 1864 that 1,500 men had died of “disease, overwork and exposure” at Morganza, La. All three regiments were comprised of former Missouri slaves, including more than 1,000 from Central Missouri.

Before the war ended, the 65th and 67th regiments were combined, and the men of the 62nd and 65th regiments, planning for their future and that of their families, entrusted $6,000 to Lt. Richard Foster to start a school. Finding St. Louis inhospitable, Foster located Lincoln Institute in Jefferson City. It is now Lincoln University.

Many blacks are only vaguely aware of the role their ancestors played in the war as soldiers, Ratliff said. “I think many things have not been brought to our attention,” she said. “We are so busy fighting to hold onto the rights we have, we sometimes lose some of our historical value.”

January 12, 2015

Deaths

Bill J. Priest, founding chancellor of the Dallas County Community College District, died on December 31. He was 97. He led the district from 1965 until his retirement, in 1981. Earlier, from 1955 to 1964, he was the first president of American River Junior College, in California. He was also a past board chairman of the American Council on Education and a past president of the American Association of Community Colleges.
Robert H. McCabe, who led Miami Dade College from 1980 to 1995, died on December 23. He was 86. He oversaw a vast expansion of the college as well as rebuilding efforts after Hurricane Andrew did $13-million of damage to its campuses in 1992.

William P. Gerberding, who led the University of Washington from 1979 to 1995, died on December 27. He was 85. He helped the institution get through budget difficulties, in part by attracting substantial private financial support.

James M. Hester, president of New York University from 1962 to 1975, died on December 31 in New Jersey. He was 90. Mr. Hester is credited with guiding the university through times of protest, and with raising its quality and stature.

Jane E. Raley, a clinical professor of law and co-director of Northwestern University Law School’s Center on Wrongful Convictions, died of cancer on December 25. She was 57. Several cases she worked on during her 14 years at the center led to the release of prisoners.

John B. MacDonald, president of the University of British Columbia from 1962 to 1967, died on December 23. He was 96. The recommendations he made in a 1962 report led to the restructuring of higher education in British Columbia, including the establishment of Simon Fraser University and the University of Victoria. Mr. MacDonald later became chief executive of the Council of Ontario Universities.

Loren Reid, a professor emeritus of communication at the University of Missouri at Columbia, died on December 25. He was 109. Mr. Reid taught at the university from 1935 to 1938 and again from 1944 to 1975, when he retired. During those years, he taught more than 9,000 students.

January 11, 2015

Obama’s Free-College Plan Evokes Spirit of Historic Higher Ed Acts

By Jack Stripling

NO MU MENTION
With a proposal that would send millions of students to community colleges free, President Obama joins a line of national leaders who have asked taxpayers to foot other people’s tuition bills for the greater public good.

The president’s plan, still short on details, has been described by higher-education experts as a clarion call in the spirit of the original GI Bill, which became law in 1944, or the Pell Grant program, which was created by Congress in 1972. The GI Bill sent almost eight million veterans of World War II to college, and the Pell Grant program assists millions of low-income students each year.

Given the polarized political environment, there is considerable skepticism that President Obama’s proposal has any realistic chance of passing through the Republican-controlled Congress. Nevertheless, the president has spawned a national conversation about whether the cost burden for community-college tuition ought to be shifted from individuals to taxpayers.

Christopher P. Loss, an associate professor of public policy and higher education at Vanderbilt University, said the Obama plan reaffirmed the federal government’s role in postsecondary education. The proposal has already been attacked by critics as another example of Washington overreach, but Mr. Loss said that it was a logical extension of what the government already does through Pell Grants, among other student-aid programs.

"You could easily position this within that grand narrative of educational access, of the federal government taking pretty significant steps to adapt the educational system to the realities of a changing world," said Mr. Loss, author of Between Citizens and the State: The Politics of American Higher Education in the 20th Century (Princeton University Press, 2012). "At one point it was enough to have universal K-12 education, but we’re now in a different era."

For much of the public, that may not be persuasive. Joni E. Finney, director of the University of Pennsylvania’s Institute for Research on Higher Education, expressed doubts that the president’s use of the bully pulpit would change the fact that many taxpayers see college as a private benefit for individuals rather than a broader public good.

"I’m only cautiously optimistic about the proposal," she said. "I still think people believe in the private benefit so much. They are willing to tolerate these costs' being pushed more and more to students."

As described by White House officials, the plan would cost the federal government about $60-billion over 10 years. That would cover three-quarters of the anticipated cost, saddling participating states with the rest of the tab.

Lessons of the GI Bill

Any president pushing a major federal higher-education program would naturally look to the passage of the GI Bill as an example. But the postwar political environment was far different from that of today. And Mr. Obama’s proposal is likely to be a more difficult sell because it would extend a benefit well beyond a distinct set of individuals to whom the nation felt indebted.
Glenn C. Altschuler, co-author of The GI Bill: The New Deal for Veterans (Oxford University Press, 2009), said the landmark 1940s legislation was palatable to the American public because it was perceived as something akin to compensation for veterans. That is distinctly different, he said, from subsidizing the cost of college for all citizens.

"The GIs were seen as having earned this benefit, and therefore it had a different meaning to say they were going to college for free," said Mr. Altschuler, a professor of American studies at Cornell University. "They were perceived as having put their lives on the line to preserve democracy and freedom in the United States. The debate we’re now having is whether or not community college should be an entitlement."

The passage of the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944, as the GI Bill was officially named, was not without controversy. Some lawmakers, for example, questioned whether the benefit should cover only those who served in combat. But President Obama faces obstacles in Congress that President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who signed the GI Bill into law, did not, Mr. Altschuler said.

"The traditions of bipartisanship in the 1940s were simply much more robust than they are today," he said. "Having folks in both parties come together on legislation, even if it meant a larger role for the federal government, was just much more likely than it is these days, when collaboration across the aisle seems well-nigh impossible."

Even so, the very existence of President Obama’s proposal has inspired hope among some community-college officials.

"There’s a concern of how is this going to be funded and will it gain support in Congress and the states," said Lenore P. Rodicio, provost of academic and student affairs at Miami Dade College, whose 165,000 students make it one of the nation’s largest community colleges. "But the idea of even having this conversation at a level that has never occurred before has brought a lot of optimism."
By Michael Stratford

NO MENTION

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. -- President Obama traveled here Friday to make his first full-fledged pitch for tuition-free community college, as White House officials confirmed that the ambitious proposal would cost about $60 billion over the next decade.

Speaking to several hundred students and faculty at Pellissippi State Community College, Obama presented his plan as an economic imperative. He also said it was based on responsibility -- of individual students, of colleges and of states in boosting their spending on higher education.

“This isn’t a blank check. It’s not a free lunch,” Obama said. “But for those who are willing to do the work, and states that want to be a part of this, it can be a game-changer.”

Free Tuition on "This Week"

Gail O. Mellow, president of LaGuardia Community College, and Robert Kelchen, an expert on higher education finance, will discuss President Obama's proposal Friday on "This Week," Inside Higher Ed's free news podcast. Sign up here for notification of new "This Week" podcasts.

The most important player in the short run, though, will be Congress, which needs to approve the $6 billion-a-year proposal.

Obama’s trip to Pellissippi, which is on the western outskirts of Knoxville, comes as part of a several-state tour to preview the themes of his State of the Union address later this month. During the speech he will address a Congress controlled completely by Republicans for the first time in his presidency.

Some of Obama’s largest higher education accomplishments in his first term -- such as boosting spending on federal Pell Grants and switching to 100 percent direct lending, ending federal bank-based student loans -- were hard-fought but approved by a Congress that likely was far friendlier to the administration’s agenda than the current one, controlled completely by Republicans.

More on the Obama Plan

Two-year-college leaders like the plan, but some experts worry about details and whether the money could be more targeted.

The president's free community college plan may change the balance between the federal government, states and colleges.

The president’s trip to Tennessee appeared to reflect the new political dynamics the administration faces as it begins its final two years in office. And his visit raised, to some extent, the prospect that
college access and affordability is an area on which Obama may be able to work with Congressional Republicans.

The president chose to make his community college pitch in a state that is led by a Republican governor, Bill Haslam, who not only has been praised widely for his innovation in higher education but who has also played ball with the administration.

Haslam last year participated in the White House’s higher education summit. He has praised the U.S. Department of Education’s controversial new teacher preparation regulations. And, separately, he is negotiating with the Obama administration on a compromise Medicaid expansion for his state.

Speaking before Obama and Vice President Joe Biden, who also made remarks, Haslam alluded to that bipartisanship. He said while Democrats and Republicans may disagree on how to approach income inequality, they can agree that community colleges are vital to economic growth.

In an unusual display, the state’s two Republican senators, both of whom are assuming powerful roles as committee chairmen in the new Congress, traveled with the president to the event.

Obama spoke in a building named after Sen. Lamar Alexander, the former education secretary and governor, who has said he’s open to working with the administration on higher education issues. For his part, Obama said he would join Alexander in seeking to simplify the federal student aid application.

“It just shouldn’t be that hard to apply for aid for college,” Obama said, noting that the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, known as the FAFSA, includes more than 100 questions.

“That’s something we should be able to agree on,” he added. “Let’s get that done this year.”

Alexander and Sen. Bob Corker, who is now chair of the Senate foreign relations committee, were seated next to Ted Mitchell, the under secretary who oversees higher education policy at the Education Department.

Despite the bipartisan overtures on Friday, though, the administration’s community college plan will undoubtedly be a tough sell in Congress.

Alexander, who chairs the Senate education committee, told reporters after Obama’s speech that he was glad the president was promoting the Tennessee Promise but said he was pursuing the “wrong way” to expand it.

“That’s the difference between Democrats and Republicans,” Alexander said. “Republicans look at a good idea and want to expand it state-by-state. Democrats look at a good idea and want to make it a federal program operated from Washington.”

If states create their own version of the Tennessee program, he said, the boost in community college enrollment would mean the federal government would have to pay for more Pell Grants. Alexander said he would be willing to find the funding to support that increase.
House Republicans went further in criticizing Obama’s plan. Speaker John Boehner’s spokesman said that the idea “seems more like a talking point than a plan.”

Rep. John Kline, the Minnesota Republican who chairs the House education committee, said in a statement that the president was “proposing yet another multi-billion dollar federal program that will compete with existing programs for limited taxpayer dollars.”

Support from Senate Dems, Trouble for For-Profits?

Some Senate Democrats, meanwhile, rallied around the president’s proposal, which will be formally included as part of the administration’s budget request to Congress next month.

Washington Sen. Patty Murray, the top Democrat on the Senate’s education committee, said she backed the plan.

“Expanding access to college and making it more affordable is a ticket to the middle class for millions of students across the country,” she said in a written statement. "I look forward to working with President Obama and my colleagues to make this goal a reality."

Sen. Dick Durbin, an outspoken critic of for-profit education, said he was pleased the president was promoting community colleges as “a more affordable, higher quality alternative to for-profit colleges.”

Many programs at for-profit colleges often compete directly with those at local community colleges. The Obama proposal is aimed both at two-year programs that are a stepping stone to bachelor’s degrees as well as at occupational training certificates.

For-profit analysts said the plan, which is aimed at expanding community college capacity nationwide, would be a negative for the for-profit sector’s revenues.

Community college advocates heaped praise on the Obama plan, which they said reflects the most dramatic action yet by this administration to boost their institutions. Some, however, remained concerned about the plan’s details, many of which have yet to be released.

Even if the plan fails to attract enough support in Congress, its lasting effect might be in advancing the President’s message that some form of higher education is for everyone.

In Knoxville, community college officials said one success of their statewide tuition-free program and its county-run predecessor has been a shift in how the public approaches their institutions.

Pellissippi State President Anthony Wise said that before the programs, the majority of students registered for classes only shortly before they began.

“We’d have kids show up the day before classes,” he said. “It was like: ‘who decided to go to college today?’ ”

The scholarship programs, which require students to commit to attending college far earlier and do more serious planning, he said, have boosted completion rates.
David Key, who has been a professor of history at Pellissippi State for the past 12 years, looked on from the audience as many of his students stood behind the president during his announcement.

“I think this could become a cornerstone of higher education policy, much like what the Pell Grant was in the past,” he said of the Obama plan. “If our college and our county had a small part to play in that, we’re just proud.”