Mizzou revamps fundraising system

By Dave Matter

COLUMBIA, Mo. • Multiple forces led to the University of Missouri’s decision to join the Southeastern Conference four years ago. And while some prominent voices and milestone moments will forever mark Mizzou’s exodus from the Big 12, a potent fan-led grassroots campaign helped shift the tide toward change.

In the months and weeks that led to MU’s announcement on Nov. 6, 2011 that it was fleeing the Big 12 for the SEC, thousands of emails flooded into athletics department officials and the university system curators.

As Missouri accepted the SEC’s invitation to become its 14th member, MU athletics director Mike Alden used the moment to challenge the same fans who demanded change.

“We’re known as the Show-Me State,” Alden said that day at Mizzou’s pep rally. “It’s time for us to step up and show other people who we are.”

Over the last few days, Missouri’s athletics department made the same request with a new delivery. Hoping to gain ground in the SEC arms race, Mizzou’s latest reconstruction job is a makeover of the Tiger Scholarship Fund, MU’s athletics fundraising program. The new model puts a priority on donor level rather than points accrued through giving.

Missouri’s athletics revenue in the 2014 fiscal year included $20,113,654 in donations, which according to USA Today’s latest survey of college athletics finances ranked 11th among the SEC’s 13 public institutions. Over the last three years, Mizzou’s average revenue through donations ($16.6 million) was 12th among those same 13 SEC schools, ahead of only Mississippi.

In a pamphlet Mizzou recently mailed to TSF members to explain the new system — with the tagline “Excellence Starts Here” — a graphic lists MU’s private dollars raised as $22 million annually, last among the league’s public schools.

“We know we can do better,” said Tim Steadman, MU’s associate athletics director for advancement.

He anticipated some initial complaints, especially from longtime donors who have accrued high levels of priority points. But the administration believes the new model will help Mizzou afford steeper bills — full cost of attendance payments to scholarship athletes, increased tuition costs, increased travel costs — and, perhaps most important, close the SEC gap on spending for salaries and facilities.

“Our competitors are not apologizing for (raising more money),” Steadman said. “Our competitors are more aggressive in how they’re securing funding. We need to do that, too.”

The SEC announced Friday that members will earn a record $31.2 million in shared revenue this year, but the only way for SEC schools to out-muscle their peers financially is through private fundraising.

With the new model, Mizzou hopes to surpass Arkansas and Kentucky, the the SEC’s next tier of earners. MU’s revenue for 2014 ($83.7 million) ranked 11th in the SEC and No. 32 nationally, behind Arkansas (No. 9 in SEC, 24 overall) and Kentucky (No. 10, 25 overall).
“If we do a good job we can jump those programs and be in the middle of the pack,” Steadman said.

Under Mizzou’s new model, which donors learned about in recent days via mailings and online videos, TSF benefits will be measured by donor level, depending on how much they give annually. Donors will be slotted in one of 13 levels, from the lowest level (Booster, $50-$100 a year) to the highest (Flagship, $100,000 a year). Steadman said Mizzou currently has 25 donors who give at least $100,000 a year.

From there, all donors will be ranked within their level based on priority point totals. That total is consolidated from football and men’s basketball priority points. Donors earn points for dollars spent and consecutive years they’ve been TSF members and bought season tickets.

Mizzou will then assign all donors a ranking, from No. 1 to approximately 9,100. Those rankings will be locked in on May 31, 2016, and be used to determine benefits for the 2016-17 school year. Benefits include parking passes, new or additional season tickets, seat relocation, premium seating — plus away game, neutral site and postseason ticket requests.

The changes will not impact parking benefits for the upcoming football and basketball seasons. As long as donors maintain their current annual donations, their seat locations won’t change under the new system, Steadman said.

With the new system, donors can figure an estimate for their ranking with an online donor rank calculator before the rankings lock in next May.

Missouri will become the seventh SEC school that uses the donor level-first mode. After studying various models, MU favored a plan that “doesn’t have an impact on the masses,” Steadman said.

Missouri will host a series of meetings to discuss the changes, including a stop in St. Louis on June 10 at the Marriott West, starting at 6 p.m.

The new model was planned before new AD Mack Rhoades replaced Alden in April, but its objectives fall in line with themes Rhoades has stressed in early talks with fans and media.

“Their are current (donors) who have been really, really generous. We need to ask them to be more generous,” he said April 30. “Then there are people we don’t know yet who we need to meet and get engaged and get them excited about our student-athletes, our coaches, our athletics program, our university and then ... hopefully they’ll invest in the program. I’m confident we can do that.”

Mizzou to base football, basketball parking on donations

The University of Missouri-Columbia said Monday it will create a parking system for football and basketball games beginning in the 2016-17 school year based on fundraising.

Mizzou ranked 13 out of 14 Southeastern Conference schools in athletic funding last year, raising $22 million, the Columbia Daily Tribune reports. That prompted the change.
“People are going to say it’s all about money. I don’t want to come on too strong, but it is,” Tim Stedman, the Mizzou associate athletic director in charge of the Tiger Scholarship Fund, told the Tribune.

Thirteen donor levels will range from "Booster" ($50 annually) to "Flagship" ($100,000 or more annually). Those who give more money will be given better parking.

However, donors can move up within their level by obtaining priority points. One priority point will be given for every $100 given to the Tiger Scholarship Fund; two points for every consecutive year purchasing season tickets in any sport; and three points for every consecutive year being a member of the Tiger Scholarship Fund.

A one-time priority point allocation will be given for the number of years a fan has held season tickets (10 points for one to nine years; 25 points for 10 to 19 years; 50 points for 20 to 29 years; and 100 points for 30 or more years).

The Tribune reports that Mizzou's previous system made it possible for a new donor who gave more to get worse parking than someone with seniority. That will no longer be possible.

**THE KANSAS CITY STAR.**

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Mizzou athletic department to change donor points system

BY TOD PALMER
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COLUMBIA

**Significant changes are coming to Tiger Scholarship Fund as Missouri aims to remain financially competitive in the Southeastern Conference.**

As an athletic department, MU ranks 13th among 14 SEC schools in private giving, which helps pay for scholarships, travel costs and facility improvements among other considerations.
Missouri raised $22 million in private donations during the 2013-14 fiscal year, which ranked ahead of only Vanderbilt, but the Tigers’ athletic department hopes a new donor level-first model for private giving will help move MU closer to the middle of the pack.

“We’re going to hear that it’s all about money and I don’t want to come across too strong here, but it is,” Missouri associate athletic director for advancement Tim Stedman said. “Our competitors are not apologizing for that and our competitors are more aggressive in how they’re going about securing funding. We need to do that, too.”

Under the old Priority Points system, MU boosters had separate point totals for football and another for men’s basketball and only earned points based on gifts made for seat premiums and parking.

That will no longer be the case as the Tigers’ athletic department transitions July 1 to the donor level-first model, which will deemphasize points and combine the football and men’s basketball tallies into one concise donor rank.

Under the new system, a donor’s total annual contribution to Missouri athletics — including gifts for suites and club seating, facility projects, endowments, sport-specific gifts and, for the first time, donations to the Total Person Program — will determine a booster’s donor annual level.

Points will only be used to determine the order within the 13 donor levels, including six created for the new — Rock M ($100-249), True Tiger ($7,500-9,999), Excellence ($15,000-24,999), All-American ($25,000-49,999), Hall of Fame ($50,000-99,999) and Flagship ($100,000+). For example, a donor who has given $500 per year to the Tiger Scholarship Fund won’t lose any points he or she has accumulated, but a donor willing to give $1,000 per year can leapfrog that person based on donor rank by buying into a higher donor level. Missouri hopes new donors will take advantage of the chance to buy in and that existing donors who seek greater benefits will consider bumping up donor levels.

Every dollar given to Missouri athletics will help determine a donor level, which locks May 31 each year, and will be used to determine rank for parking passes, new and additional season-ticket requests and tickets requests for away, neutral site and postseason games.

Tigers supporters still will receive points for every $100 in gifts, consecutive years of season-ticket membership and consecutive years of stewardship to the Tiger Scholarship Fund. There
also will be a one-time bonus point award for season-ticket members in conjunction with the revised system.

“One of the things that we like about this model is that we’re terming it an opportunity,” Stedman said. “If you want to stay at the donor level that you’re at right now, you can do that, keep your seats and there’s no increase in your seat premium. But if you want to increase your investment and be rewarded commensurate with that, now you have an opportunity to do that.”

MU will not reallocate seats or raise seat premiums on current season-ticket members for now, but parking will be reallocated completely based on the new system.

“We didn’t want to impact everybody,” Stedman said. “We could have, as most programs do, conducted a seat reallocation reseating plan. Again, that would have affected everybody. … This model is a balance of rewarding loyalties and generating the resource necessary to compete at the highest level.”

Missouri hopes donors who desire better parking and better access to tickets will consider bumping up to a higher donor level. It also hopes that gifts to capital campaigns for projects like the new softball stadium or the proposed south end zone complex will increase. With the additional revenue, MU believes it can close the gap with or even vault ahead of Kentucky, Mississippi, Mississippi State and Arkansas in terms of private gifts.

“Ideally, you want to be in the same realm as South Carolina, Tennessee and Georgia as that next stack of SEC schools that are name-brand, national-level schools,” said Derek Steinbach, assistant director of development for the Tiger Scholarship Fund.

Under the old points-only system, donors had no way to gauge their standings relative to other donors. They knew that a $1,000 donation earned 10 priority points, but there was no way to know how much of an impact that had on their donor rank, Stedman said. Now, all donors will be able to visit the redesigned Tigers Scholarship Fund website, which launched Monday, and use the Donor Rank Calculator to see how a contribution will impact their standing in real time.

Missouri used to work around flaws in the old system by making special arrangements for parking or tickets with donors wishing to give a sizable lump sum. That won’t be necessary under the new system, Stedman said.
“When you’ve got deals that are out there, there’s no equity,” Stedman said. “Now, everybody will be treated the same based on the model, so it will be more fair and more equitable and more transparent.”

Among SEC athletic department, Missouri is the seventh to use a donor level-first model, joining Arkansas, Auburn, Florida, South Carolina, Tennessee and Vanderbilt.

Missouri — which claims nearly 9,000 donors, an increase from 6,100 in the final year in the Big 12 — is trying to strike while the football team is hot. Football is a driver for athletic departments across the country and the Tigers have won back-to-back SEC East titles, winning a program record 23 games during the last two seasons.

“We need to generate more money to prepare champions for life,” Stedman said.

MU has scheduled four town halls meetings to address donor questions and concerns, including one 6 p.m. June 9 at the Four Points by Sheraton Kansas City Sports Complex, 4011 Blue Ridge Cutoff.

The other town meetings are Thursday at Mizzou Arena’s Clinton Club, June 10 at the St. Louis Marriott West and June 11 at the University Plaza Hotel in Springfield. Each meeting starts at 6 p.m.

NEW TIGER SCHOLARSHIP FUND DONOR LEVELS

*indicates new donor level

- **Booster:** $50-99
- **Rock M*: $100-249
- **Black & Gold:** $250-499
- **Varsity:** $500-999
- **Champion:** $1,000-2,999
- **Columns:** $3,000-4,999
- **Gold:** $5,000-7,499
- **True Tiger*: $7,500-9,999
MU retirees donate nearly $2.5 million to University of Missouri

By Lauren Puckett

The MU Retirees Association gifted a check of $2,495,672 to the University of Missouri May 22 at the Chancellor’s Retirees luncheon in Reynolds Alumni Center on the MU campus.

The donation was organized as part of the annual “It’s My Mizzou” campaign.

MURA, composed of more than 800 MU faculty and staff retirees, organizes volunteer efforts, program donations and event support for the university. Nearly 350 retirees were in attendance at the luncheon, according to a press release by Mark Barna, the Mizzou News strategist.

“This is the most engaged group of retirees I have seen,” Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin said.

Several MURA members were honored with awards during the course of the luncheon. George Kennedy, who retired as managing editor of the Columbia Missourian in 2001, was honored with the title of Faculty Retiree of the Year. Susan Turner, a former School of Medicine Department of Child Health employee, was awarded Staff Retiree of the Year.

Both Kennedy and Turner have kept busy with volunteer and philanthropy work during their retirement years. Since 2001, Kennedy has volunteered his time at the Food Bank for Central and Northeast Missouri. Meanwhile, Turner spent 10 years coordinating garment and toy collection
for The Container Project, a nonprofit organization that ships collection containers to the poor in Nicaragua.

MURA was established in 1990 to represent the interests of the retired MU community and continue their involvement in MU events. MURA regularly meets with campus administrators to oversee new and ongoing programs, while also assisting retirees with important issues such as pensions and insurance. Membership in MURA is open to all University of Missouri staff and faculty who are 55 years or older and vested in the retirement plan, according to the MURA website.

During the luncheon, Loftin thanked association members for their continued dedication to the university.

Sports digest: Mizzou basketball aide takes post at DePaul

Associated Press

Bryan Tibaldi, Missouri’s director of basketball operations the last two seasons, will take over the same role at DePaul, both schools announced Monday. Tibaldi has been on Mizzou’s staff for four years, the last two as director of operations under former coach Frank Haith and current coach Kim Anderson.

At DePaul, Tibaldi will reunite with Blue Demons coach Dave Leitao, who served on Haith’s staff in 2013-14. Former MU assistant coach Rick Carter also works on Leitao’s staff as associate head coach. Tibaldi, a former walk-on player at Michigan State, came to Mizzou in 2011 after working for the Chicago Bulls for two seasons in the team’s video department and front office. He served as Haith’s video coordinator from 2011-13 before earning a promotion to director of operations. (Dave Matter)

STORY CONTINUES WITH NO MU MENTION ...
Project helps prevent Jaywalking


COLUMBIA, MO -- Road construction crews across Mid-Missouri are in high gear as the weather gets warmer.

College Avenue, near Mizzou’s East Campus Neighborhood, will be down to one lane in both the north and south directions throughout the summer as construction crews build a safer street for jaywalking college students. A $750,000 MoDOT grant pays for most of the project with the City of Columbia and the University of Missouri each paying $35,000. The plan to reduce jaywalking on one of the busiest streets near the Mizzou campus calls for a concrete median in the middle of the street and 2 signalized pedestrian crossing points. The median would help stop jaywalkers from cutting in and out of traffic. A recent study released by the City of Columbia indicates 5,000 people crossed College Avenue during a 2-day period without the use of the existing traffic signals. Mizzou Senior Mitchell Nelson admits he and his fraternity brothers frequently jaywalk on College Avenue.

Nelson said, “I know one of my fraternity brothers did get hit by a car. It definitely happens. It wasn’t anything serious, but it definitely happens.”

Motorists who frequently drive on College Avenue said the new median blocking jaywalkers is a great idea.

Motorist Michael Kelly said, “It would mean a lot safer passageway for the students and for the drivers, as well.”

Motorist Michael Derlicki said, “Visibility for the driver can be kind of bad. You never know who may just jump out and try to cross the street or anything. I think it’s a good idea.”

A nearby business owner believes a new median on College Avenue will help save lives.

Lee Street Deli Owner William Muirhead said, “I’ve almost ran over a couple of them myself.”
Work is also underway on the barrier walls of 5 bridges along Route 63 in Boone County. The work will cause lane closures during the next 2 weeks.

Columbia City Officials said most of the improvements on College Avenue will be ready by the time college students return for the fall semester.

Columbia City Officials said many accidents on College Avenue involving pedestrians go unreported.

Free SAT Prep Now Has the Official Stamp of Approval

If you want to feel confident that you’ve done everything to help your high schooler excel on college admissions exams, you’d better be able to shell out serious dollars for specialized coaching.

Or at least, that’s what commercial test-prep companies would have you believe. And that’s exactly what the makers of the SAT college entrance exam hope to disprove with a new tool out today.

The Official SAT Practice, an interactive online platform, is the result of a partnership between online education company Khan Academy and the College Board, which manages the SAT.

College Board announced plans last year to make the SAT more transparent and more relevant to what test takers actually need to know for college-level work. With those changes, College Board president and CEO David Coleman also promised to combat an expensive test-prep culture that drives inequality in college admissions. This free tool is part of the attempt to do so.

College Board wants to partner with school districts and nonprofit organizations to make sure that students in economically disadvantaged areas know about the tool and have resources, such as computers and Internet access, to take advantage of it. The Boys and Girls Club of America is the first such partnership announced.

The tool includes diagnostic quizzes to determine a student’s skill level, practice questions that include step-by-step hints if you feel stuck, and how-to videos. There are also study tips and full-length practice exams.
The official practice website is tied to the new SAT, which will come out in March 2016, meaning the tool will largely benefit rising juniors and younger students.

Up until now, test-preparation companies have always been on the outside looking in, says Cyndie Schmeiser, chief of assessment at College Board. “Now the assessment and the practice tools are fully aligned, creating a connection between assessment and instruction that we haven’t seen before,” she says.

While there have always been some free test-prep resources available, it’s been a hodgepodge of websites offering study tips or practice questions, little snippets here and there, says Nicole Hurd, CEO of College Advising Corps, which works with more than 500 high schools to increase the number of low-income and first generation students in college. “Having a trusted, one-stop-shop resource from the people that actually create the test and people who understand how to do online education in a thoughtful way, it’s a game changer,” she says.

So what can for-profit companies offer with their pricey courses that College Board and Khan Academy can’t with a free one?

Peace of mind. Right now, parents don’t know enough to know they don’t need to spend the money, says Eric Loken, a professor at Pennsylvania State University. Fifteen years ago, Loken helped found Number2.com, a website that offers free SAT practice. “It feels like when you spend $500, you’re doing something good for your kid,” Loken says. “Someone offers the image of authority, and you go for the brand name and recognition.”

The problem is that there’s little evidence that the return on that investment is what people think it is, Loken says. Studies show that test prep has a positive but small effect on scores—an average of between 30 and 40 points.

Regardless, the major testing companies don’t appear concerned that increased accessibility will threaten profits for the $4.5 billion industry.

“We think it’s great,” says Michael Boothroyd, director of SAT and ACT programs for Kaplan. “The more material and the more transparent the materials are on the exam, the better.”

Kaplan’s online class costs $300, and Princeton Review offers a self-paced course starting at $169. Both companies also have much more expensive in-person coaching options.

Executives at both companies say they’re confident their test-prep material can still offer advantages over the free version that has College Board’s backing.

Boothroyd points to the role live teachers play in helping students improve their score, while Robert Franek, senior vice president at the Princeton Review, notes that the ACT has surpassed the SAT as the dominant college admissions exam. (The ACT first passed the SAT in 2012, and had 1.84 million test takers to the SAT’s 1.67 million in 2014.) The Princeton Review can help students figure out which test is best for them and help them prepare, Franek says.
DeAngela Burns-Wallace, an assistant vice provost for undergraduate studies at the University of Missouri, reviewed the website before it was released to the public and says the major difference between the new free tool and all the existing tools is a shift from test-taking strategy to learning the skills being tested.

Most of the options already out there focus on the test itself, but if the goal is to really help students learn, that’s where Khan Academy’s adaptive learning — designed to adjust lessons based on a student’s abilities — is powerful.

“This is going to be the highest quality, best measure guide for these types of exams,” she says. “That opens up access in a very different way.”

Not So Quick on Canceling Debt

June 2, 2015

By Donald E. Heller

NO MU MENTION

A lot of attention is currently being paid to the topic of student loan debt in the United States. Earlier this year, President Obama proposed to make community college free for all students, motivated at least in part by concerns over the growing volume of student loan debt in the nation. With the 2016 presidential campaign starting to gear up, there are already indications that student loans will be an important topic of debate.

I recently received in my email inbox a request to sign a petition to forgive all student loan debt in the country. The email did not come from some fringe group that was an offshoot of the Occupy movement that first started a few years ago and included as one of its platforms the elimination of all student loan debt. Rather, the email came from the American Federation of Teachers, the second-largest teachers’ union in the country, representing more than 1.6 million members, including many in public higher education. The AFT, in conjunction with other groups, is calling on President Obama and Congress to wipe out all of the existing $1.3 trillion in loan debt held by current and former college students in the nation.
At first glance, this may seem like a good idea. Much has been written about the growing volume of student loans and the impact it has had on students and former students. But much of what the media has written about is grossly exaggerated and focuses on outliers. The vast majority of students are borrowing more reasonable amounts, and while some students do struggle to pay back their loans, this is not a reason why all student loans should be forgiven and future student loans eliminated.

In the ideal world, colleges and universities, along with grants and scholarships, would be funded at a level that would not require students to borrow to attend college. But we don’t live in the ideal world. The fact is that states have been disinvesting in the public higher education system over the last dozen years when measured in constant dollars on a per-student basis. The chart below is from the State Higher Education Finance Report for fiscal year 2014, compiled by the State Higher Education Executive Officers association.

In FY 2014, per-student state appropriations for higher education were 24 percent below the funding level in 1989. The result, also shown in the chart, is that net tuition revenue (the tuition received by public colleges and universities after grant aid is subtracted) has more than doubled during this period. Considering that three-quarters of all undergraduates are enrolled in public institutions, it’s not surprising that this increase in tuition prices has led to a large increase in student loan borrowing. This relationship between state funding and tuition costs has been well documented by a number of studies, including a recent one by the think tank Demos.

If you look closely at the chart, you’ll see a repeating pattern -- higher education appropriations hit a peak just about as a recession hits the nation, and then decline for a few years following:

Here I have overlaid in gray the durations of the three recessions, as determined by the National Bureau of Economic Research, that have hit the country in the last 25 years. State expenditures tend to lag the onset of recessions, so following each recession, funding for higher education has been decreased for three to four years. As the economy improves, and state revenues increase, funding for higher education tends to rebound.

But there is another important pattern in this figure. Following the recession of 2001, state expenditures never returned to the high point of $8,964 per student before the next recession hit in late 2007. And it’s highly unlikely that as state budgets rebound from the most recent recession -- the Great Recession, as some have named it -- higher education funding will return to the 2001 peak.

Thus, students are going to continue to face increasing tuition costs and will continue to need student loans to help meet those costs. A call for forgiving all student loan debt would presumably also entail getting rid of, or strictly curtailing, future loans as well -- otherwise we’d find ourselves in exactly the same situation down the road. Eliminating student loans will not rein in increasing prices; tuition prices have continued to rise even as federal loan limits have not. In a report I wrote for the American Council on Education, I demonstrated that there is little, if any, empirical evidence for the Bennett Hypothesis, the argument that federal student loans lead to increased tuition prices.
Reasonable amounts of student loan borrowing are well worth the investment of attaining a college degree. Eliminating all student loans will only lead to restricting access to college for first-generation students and those from moderate-income families who need assistance in paying for their postsecondary education.

**BIO**

*Donald E. Heller is dean of the College of Education at Michigan State University.*

June 2, 2015

**Meet the College Consultant the AAUP Seeks to Shame**

By Peter Schmidt

**NO MU MENTION**

When the American Association of University Professors holds its annual conference this month, its members will consider rebuking several colleges and, by extension, one very prominent higher-education consultant.

Robert C. Dickeson, who has guided colleges throughout the nation in choosing to either buttress or scrap academic programs, stands accused in two new AAUP investigative reports of inspiring institutions to trample professors’ rights.

Those accusations are hardly the first criticisms that the AAUP has lodged against Mr. Dickeson in his long career in higher education. He first came under fire from the association in the early 1980s, when it censured the University of Northern Colorado for faculty layoffs he carried out as that institution’s president. Nine years ago, the AAUP denounced his guidance to a federal panel on the future of higher education, known as the Spellings Commission, as "seriously flawed" and full of unfounded attacks on the nation’s college faculties. His guidance blamed faculty salaries for rising college costs and argued that tenure had evolved from a safeguard of academic freedom into "a system to protect job security."

More recently, the AAUP took him to task two years ago in an investigative report that led to its censure of National Louis University. Mr. Dickeson did not directly advise the academic
downsizing that led to the censure — instead, the association lit into him because National Louis had used his book and a separate consultant who embraced his ideas.

Last month the AAUP published reports on faculty layoffs at the University of Southern Maine and Felician College that characterized him as a threat to well-established academic principles.

In a recent interview, Mr. Dickeson expressed befuddlement over the AAUP’s criticisms. He argued that the group had greatly overstated his influence on Felician, National Louis, and Southern Maine, and appeared to be ignoring how much his approach to winnowing academic programs emphasizes faculty involvement in such decisions.

It is not hard to see, however, how his ideas would irk the AAUP, which continuously finds itself battling both direct attacks on traditional faculty rights, such as proposed legislation in Wisconsin that would make it easier for universities to lay off tenured professors, and employment trends that have made tenure-track jobs increasingly elusive.

Rather than encouraging colleges to abide by the AAUP’s standards, Mr. Dickeson argues that the standards are outdated and cause colleges to waste money on superfluous course offerings, research of questionable value, and faculty members whose services are not in demand.

He accuses the AAUP of having "converted itself from a professional organization into a union" focused on preserving jobs at the expense of colleges’ financial health and ability to meet students’ needs. "You have got," he says, "to be able to have institutions adapt."

Weighty Decisions

Mr. Dickeson heads two higher-education consulting firms, Academic Strategy Partners and Education Metrics, both of which specialize in helping colleges gauge the performance of academic programs to decide which should get increases or reductions in financial support. Among his past positions, he was president of the University of Northern Colorado from 1981 to 1991, co-founded the Lumina Foundation for Education in 2000, and held top cabinet posts under two governors, Bruce Babbitt of Arizona and Roy Romer of Colorado.

He made a name for himself as an advocate of the winnowing of academic programs with his 1999 book Prioritizing Academic Programs and Services. In it he advises colleges to have faculty panels conduct unsparing, data-driven reviews of academic programs, deciding which to expand, keep as is, or eliminate. The criteria he proposed to guide the process include demand, various measures of faculty quality, graduate success, costs, and how much revenue a program generates.
"He came up with the idea of assessing everything that draws resources in a data-based way," says Larry Goldstein, who advises on academic-program prioritization, and sometimes works with Mr. Dickeson, as president of his own higher-education consulting firm, Campus Strategies.

Mr. Dickeson characterizes his program-prioritization process as "very bottom-up," based partly on his belief that administrators "don’t necessarily understand what’s going on in the trenches." He argues that faculty members’ involvement is crucial because of the expertise they bring and the need to have their buy-in. Typically, however, the faculty panels that advise prioritizations are selected by administrators, not faculties or faculty senates.

Missing from Mr. Dickeson’s advice to colleges is any encouragement to obey the AAUP's admonition not to lay off tenured faculty members except in case of financial exigency. He argues that "financial exigency," as a legal term, covers only colleges at death's door, and that colleges can almost never prove such a state when layoffs are challenged in court. "I run into institutions all the time that say, ‘Well, we've got a financial exigency,’ and I look at their books and say, ‘No you don’t,'" he says.

"Something new and different has to come along," says Mr. Dickeson, who calls for the development of a "more reasonable and responsible" standard for determining when a college can no longer sustain a given tenured faculty position.

Many of the colleges he advises, he says, have changed their policies on the layoffs of tenured professors in response to less-dire pressures. Although the AAUP has softened its own financial-exigency definition to include financial crises that merely threaten a college’s mission, it is nowhere close to tolerating layoffs of tenured faculty members based solely on their association with failing academic programs.

Bearing Blame

Mr. Dickeson boasts of having worked with more than 700 colleges in the United States, Canada, and beyond. Among his current clients, Frederick V. Moore, president of Buena Vista University, a private college in Iowa, says the consultant helped his institution devise "an open, transparent, evidence-based process" to reduce its academic work force.

"Anytime you undergo a process like this there is some natural tension," Mr. Moore says. He adds, however, "I think we came out of it about as well as you could expect."

Joan Propst, provost of Alderson Broaddus University, in West Virginia, says Mr. Dickeson helped her private institution embark on a three-year prioritization process. Two years in, that process has led Alderson Broaddus to cut some academic programs with low enrollments, such
as a history and studio arts, and establish new programs in high-demand areas such as legal studies and graphic design. "We based many of our decisions on where we are going to get the best bang for the buck," she says. Although her university has spared tenured professors from layoffs, its faculty members, she says, have been "less than thrilled with the process."

Mr. Dickeson’s name is so inextricably linked with program prioritization that he has ended up pulled into controversies at colleges he never advised.

The AAUP’s recent report on Southern Maine, for example, blames him for inspiring the university to eliminate about 60 full-time faculty members based on his writings, not any direct role in program cuts there. Christopher G. Quint, a Southern Maine spokesman, last month said "we know about him, like most anybody in higher education does," but not even Mr. Dickeson’s writings played a role in the university’s cutback decisions.

In the case of Felician College, Mr. Dickeson says his involvement with the New Jersey institution consisted of conducting a workshop to introduce faculty members to program prioritization, and then dispatching some of his employees to train faculty members on how to write program reviews.

Two years ago, Bill Hazelton, then an engineering professor on an academic-prioritization panel at the University of Alaska at Anchorage, lamented in a blog post that people there were invoking Mr. Dickeson’s controversial reputation "to damn any mention of program prioritization in a university environment."

In response to the more recent AAUP reports linking his work to faculty cutbacks, Mr. Dickeson says, "I will certainly accept responsibility for anything that I have done, but I don’t think it is fair to accept responsibility for things that I didn’t do."