MU breaks ground on new medical school building

By Megan Favignano

Thursday, July 9, 2015 at 1:02 pm

The University of Missouri broke ground Thursday on a $42.5 million School of Medicine building as part of a partnership that includes a new clinical campus in Springfield.

The Patient-Centered Care Learning Center on the Columbia campus is designed to provide greater collaborative space and is set to open in 2017.

For the clinical campus, MU is partnering with Springfield's CoxHealth and Mercy health systems. When fully implemented by 2020, the clinical campus will host 64 third- and fourth-year medical students in Springfield.

Eight to 12 MU medical students will complete their last two years of training in Springfield starting June 2016.

The goal of this medical school project is to train more physicians for Missouri, University of Missouri System President Tim Wolfe said during the ceremony.

MU School of Medicine Dean Patrick Delafontaine said physicians are at a premium nationwide. The school plans to increase its class size by 30 percent in an effort to address that need, Delafontaine said.

The expansion will allow MU to admit 32 additional medical students every year starting August 2017.

Student collaboration is key to the School of Medicine's curriculum, third-year medical student Patty Young said.

"One of the strongest parts of our curriculum is learning from each other," Yang said.
COLUMBIA, MO -- Columbia’s University of Missouri medical school continues to expand.

University leaders held a groundbreaking ceremony for their new patient-centered care learning center.

The ceremony celebrated the start of construction for a $42.5 million medical education building at the University of Missouri and the new MU Clinical Campus in Springfield.

The goal of the project is to train more physicians for Missouri by expanding the class size of the MU School of Medicine and adding an MU Clinical Campus in Springfield.

University of Missouri President Dr. Tim Wolfe said, “Our state and nation are in desperate need of more physicians. The facts are compelling. More than 90% of Missouri’s counties lack adequate access to health care professionals.”

The project will provide more than 300 additional physicians for Missouri, add more than $390 million annually to the state’s economy and create 3,500 new jobs.
Mizzou Medical Students to Train in Springfield


Columbia health groups celebrate new project

Watch story: http://mms.tveys.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=30eeda61-22d1-4d30-8a45-d1f7d10f0d44

COLUMBIA, Mo. - Some Columbia health groups celebrated the start of a new project that is now underway Thursday.

**On Thursday, the University of Missouri, Cox Health, and Mercy health systems held a groundbreaking ceremony for the new medical education project.**

It's aimed at training more physicians for Missouri.

Funds for the project amount to $42.5 million.

They go towards the patient centered care learning center in Columbia that's scheduled to open in 2017, and a clinical campus in Springfield.
MU announces construction of $42.5 million medical building

Watch story: http://www.komu.com/player/?video_id=29642&zone=2,5&categories=2,5

COLUMBIA - **MU broke ground Thursday on an MU School of Medicine expansion project.**

As part of the project, MU will construct the Patient-Centered Care Learning Center, a $42.5 million medical education building. In addition, MU will partner with Mercy and CoxHealth to open a new MU clinical campus in Springfield, where medical students can begin training in 2016.

"This project will provide more than 300 additional physicians for Missouri, add more than $390 million annually to the state's economy and create 3,500 new jobs," University of Missouri System President Tim Wolfe said in an MU School of Medicine statement.

MU Health officials said $12 million will come from state appropriations and $30.5 million will come from revenue bonds.

MU Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin said part of the reason for these additions to the medical school is to address a lack of physicians in the state.

"This university produces great doctors who stay in Missouri," Loftin said.

The MU School of Medicine will also expand to add 32 additional medical students to MU every year beginning in August 2017.

"We increased our medical class size, and so more Missouri citizens will have the opportunity to go to medical school," Weldon Webb, associate dean for Springfield Clinical Campus implementation, said. "And, it will provide a quality education for the clinical years either here in Columbia or in Springfield."
Webb said this project is a cost-effective way to expand enrollment because MU doesn't have to recreate clinical facilities.

"To build a new medical school is around $500 or $600 million dollars a year, so it's a real bargain for the citizens of the state," Webb said.

The Patient-Centered Care Learning Center is scheduled to open in 2017.

7 takeaways from the state of the city address

Springfield Mayor Bob Stephens gave his annual state of the city address Thursday, giving an update on what's happening across the community over the past 12 months.

Obviously, much has happened in the past year. We've summed up the mayor's comments by explaining seven quotes from the speech.

"The top three items, compiled by neighbors, include chronic nuisance properties, sidewalk and other roadway issues and crime concerns."

Stephens was referring to results of nine northwest Springfield listening sessions, in which city leaders went into neighborhoods and asked what was concerning residents.

Those neighborhoods were targeted because they tend to deal with issues related to poverty.

The results of those sessions showed what neighbors were concerned with.

"In the minds of many longtime residents, having the lights on at Heer's will signify that downtown Springfield is once again a complete and viable economic driver."

Stephens didn't just talk about the historic Heer's Building, which has been renovated and is expected to open next month. He also noted all the old buildings that are getting facelifts downtown.

The McDaniel Building was turned into student housing, the Sterling Hotel will be developed into microunits, and the Woodruff building is being reopened as Sky Eleven.

Stephens remarked how downtown Springfield is under an almost constant state of redevelopment. The view of Stephens, and other leaders, is that business will continue to grow thanks to such developments.
"All in all, it's a great economic development situation in Springfield."

Beyond the area of downtown, Springfield is continuing to see growth, Stephens said.

He mentioned the addition of two Menards home improvement stores, the construction of a Walmart Neighborhood Market near downtown, and the planned redevelopment of the empty Clarion Hotel into an "upscale shopping center."

Stephens was also encouraged by the planning of a 100-plus home project on the east side of town — the largest such development since the recession.

"Springfield continues to solidify itself as the medical hub in southwest Missouri."

Springfield's two major hospitals, Cox and Mercy, are two of the top employers and provide medical service to a large part of the area, expanding outside the city's boundaries.

In his speech he included remarks about the University of Missouri expanding its medical program to Springfield, and the opening of a new women's and children's hospital wing in south Springfield.

"Let's turn our attention skyward for a moment...about the Springfield airport."

Stephens said the Springfield-Branson National Airport has seen a great increase in traffic in the past year.

He also referenced a recent development of American Airlines soon adding twice-daily service from Springfield to its hub in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Stephens also said the airport continues to build and plan for growth in general aviation — business and private air services — which he said will be the key source of the airport's future expansion.

"Now, let's talk about some of the challenges."

It wasn't all good news from Stephens on Thursday. He spoke about the joint city-county task force, which has identified three main problem areas — unfunded state and federal mandates, the jail and criminal justice system, and the financial stability of the city and county.

Most of Stephens' time on this subject was spent discussing the crowded jail and what many officials say is the source of the problem, a backed-up criminal justice system.

Stephens said there are too few prosecutors, public defenders, judges and courthouse space.

"The future for Springfield...continues to be bright."
Stephens ended on another positive note. He has often said one of his primary goals is to help the city move forward economically, and he believes that's happening.

He also raised the issue of actually making Springfield bigger, by looking into annexation of residential areas just outside the edges of the city.

University Press Relocates Back to MU Campus

The University of Missouri Press is moving back to campus after 25 years in southeast Columbia.

The Columbia Daily Tribune reports the University of Missouri Press was founded on campus more than 50 years ago but later moved to an off-campus location designed for the press and for its warehouse and distribution center. Outside vendors now handle distribution, printing and warehousing for the press.

MU Press Director David Rosenbaum said the move to the campus site will increase the press's visibility and will be completed later this month. The MU Press was part of the UM System until 2012, when officials announced the press would be phased out.

Administrators later announced the press would remain open and would shift from the UM System to the University of Missouri.
MUPD seeking public comment as part of accreditation process

Thursday, July 9, 2015 at 2:00 pm

The community is invited to a public information session Monday afternoon about the University of Missouri Police Department’s process to receive verification from the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, or CALEA.

Assessors from CALEA will arrive Sunday to completely assess MUPD, including its management, policies, procedures, operations and support services. The verification is part of a voluntary process to achieve accreditation, Capt. Brian Weimer said in a news release.

Monday’s public session is part of the on-site assessment and is scheduled for 2 p.m. in Room 2206C of the MU Student Center, 901 Rollins St. People who can’t attend the session but still want to provide input can call 573-882-3518 between 10 a.m. and noon Monday. In-person comments and those made over the phone are limited to 10 minutes and must address the department’s ability to comply with CALEA standards.

Information on the standards can be obtained by calling Weimer at 573-882-5923 or visiting CALEA’s website at www.calea.org.

ABC Labs bought out by California firm

SARAH FINE, 11 hrs ago

COLUMBIA – The Columbia firm Analytical Bio-Chemistry Laboratories Inc., founded in 1968, was purchased on Wednesday by a network of laboratories based in California.
Evans Analytical Group, like ABC, performs testing and research for other companies. ABC is now part of the company's ChemEco division, which performs testing for agrochemicals, pharmaceuticals and industrial chemicals.

Neither company has disclosed the acquisition price.

Kristein King, a representative of ABC, said the company employed 434 people as of Monday and does not foresee layoffs in the near future.

"The whole purpose behind this acquisition was to grow the company faster," King said. "We have continued to hire all through this process, and we'll continue to hire as needed because the markets are growing and demand is high."

According to a news release from the company, EAG has 800 employees. With more than 400 people, King said ABC Labs now represents EAG's largest employee base.

To remain eligible for the $15 million in Chapter 100 bonds ABC was granted by the county in 2008, the company is required to employ a minimum of 274 people until Dec. 31, 2018, or lose its 50 percent property-tax break.

According to previous Missourian reporting, the county approved the bonds to help ABC expand its facilities and hire more people and to encourage other companies in the life-science industry to settle in Columbia.

King said that no changes in management were expected in the near future, with the exception of ABC's CEO John Bucksath, who has been named a senior vice president of EAG.

ABC has been looking for a buyer for about a year so that it could expand the company and has been working with an investment banking firm for about nine months, King said.

On June 30, ABC's shareholders voted unanimously at a meeting to proceed with the deal.
"We had 95 percent of shareholders represented in the vote, and there was a 100 percent vote in favor of this merger," King said. "Many of our shareholders have been around for a very, very long time and were interested in seeing a return on their investments. It's a positive thing for them."

**ABC Labs has deep roots in Columbia. It was founded in 1968 by MU biochemistry professor Charles Gehrke and two of his former students. The majority of the company's startup money came from Gehrke's friends and associates from Columbia, according to Gehrke's biographer, Dianna Obrien. Obrien also said the laboratory's original facilities were built with salvaged materials from buildings that were torn down to make way for Interstate 70.**

---

**Requiring a Red Flag**

July 10, 2015

By Jake New

**NO MU MENTION**

Last month, New York became the second state to require colleges to note on a transcript if a student was suspended or dismissed for sexual assault.

Though the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act is sometimes erroneously cited by colleges as preventing them from sharing such details on a college transcript, no laws prevent colleges from doing so. Few colleges are required to, however.

That’s starting to change, with growing state and federal interest in the requirement leading to laws like those recently -- and easily -- passed in New York and Virginia. In other states, the requirement has met resistance, fueled by concerns that such notations would turn academic transcripts into an internal sex offender registry for colleges.
"I think people are beginning to understand the magnitude of these problems," said Paul Trible, president of Christopher Newport University in Virginia, which has long noted on transcripts when a student has been dismissed for sexual assault. "There are individuals who transfer, and schools who take them in have no knowledge that he or she transferred because there were serious problems. In that situation, other students are being placed at risk."

The New York law echoes the one enacted a month earlier in Virginia: if a college student is suspended or expelled after being found responsible for sexual assault, both public and private colleges will now be required to note that he or she was “expelled after a finding of responsibility for a code of conduct violation.” If the student leaves the institution while a hearing is still pending, that too will be noted on the transcript. California is closing in on its own version of the bill.

An attempt to pass similar legislation in Maryland recently failed in committee. The bill lacked the support of the state's Senate Education, Health & Environmental Matters Committee and the Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault, which includes the Maryland's 17 rape crisis centers.

"MCASA believes this would have the unintended consequence of turning transcripts into a form of sex offender registry and, in turn, would necessitate turning college disciplinary proceedings into fully litigated trials," the coalition stated. "Survivors would not be helped by this practice."

In some ways, the legislation in Virginia aims to do just that, allowing students who have been found responsible for sexual assault, but not convicted, to be more easily tracked from college to college. Virginia became the first state to require colleges to note sexual assault on a transcript in May following the disappearance and murder of a University of Virginia student, Hannah Graham. The man who allegedly abducted Graham, Jesse Matthew, has since been linked to a number of other disappearances and alleged crimes.

In 2002, Matthew was accused of sexually assaulting a fellow student while a football player for Liberty University. The university will not comment on whether Matthews was punished, but he was quickly removed from the football team following the allegations. He soon left the university, and is believed to have been suspended. No charges were filed by police.

In 2003, Matthew was again accused of sexual assault, this time while playing football at Christopher Newport University. CNU, citing privacy laws, will also not say if and how Matthews was punished, but Trible, the university's president, points out that Matthew left the university shortly after the allegations.

Trible, following the revelation that Matthew had been accused of sexual assault before coming to CNU, pushed for the Virginia legislation.

“'I reached out and said ‘very few schools do this, and it ought to be done,’” Trible, formerly a Republican U.S. senator and congressman, said. “Displaying this information puts other schools on notice that something serious has occurred and they can better protect their students. The fact that a student will carry this with them for the rest of their life should also act as a powerful deterrent.”

The federal government is also exploring the requirement, with Representative Jackie Speier, a California Democrat, introducing a bill last month that may help close the information gap. During a Senate hearing in December, Senator Richard Blumenthal, a Connecticut Democrat, said too many colleges are only concerned about getting an offender off campus, not about where the student may be headed next. Colleges, he said, should also be more proactive in asking a student's previous college about any disciplinary actions it may have taken.

The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education said this week that while it does not have an official stance on noting sexual assault on transcripts, such requirements emphasize “the importance of getting sexual assault accusations right, given the stakes involved for both” accusers and the accused. “These requirements operate
under the premise that findings of facts by institutions are reliable when we know that they are not,” Nico Perrino, a FIRE spokesman, said.

Student affairs groups are split on whether colleges should note sexual assault on students’ transcripts. The American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers does not recommend providing any disciplinary notations on transcripts -- whether the student was disciplined for sexual assault or something less serious like cheating.

"The primary concerns have been that the transcript has been viewed as an academic record, that disciplinary suspensions can vary among institution types and that the transcript is a permanent record without an agreed upon means for how disciplinary notations could be removed, what can be discussed with other institutions and how receiving institutions should interpret and follow up on these notations," said Michael Reilly, executive director of AACRAO. "Since we are seeing more institutions adopt the practice of disciplinary notations in transcripts, increasingly by state mandates, we hope to focus on developing guidance on how best to implement this practice.”

The Association for Student Conduct Administration takes the opposite view, telling colleges that if a student is suspended or expelled for a violent offense, such notations should be noted, as it could help prevent those students from simply hopping from campus to campus. Colleges should also be more proactive about asking for disciplinary information of transfers, the association noted in a white paper published last year. “Transcript notations alone will not be effective at reducing the risk of violence to a campus, but the comprehensive approach to admissions, review of information and appropriate action based on that review may be helpful to institutions as they seek to manage risks on their campuses to the best of their abilities,” ASCA stated.

At some institutions, however, knowing a student was suspended or dismissed over a sexual assault has done nothing to deter another college from enrolling him, especially if that student is a men’s basketball or football player.

Earlier this year, a female University of Oregon student sued the university, alleging that it recruited the basketball player accused of assaulting her, even though it knew he had previously been accused of a separate sexual assault at Providence College. Oregon suspended the player, as well as two others involved in the assault, but the suit also states that the university scrubbed the players' transcripts of any references to sexual misconduct, making it easier for them to transfer to play elsewhere.

The university maintains it was not aware that the player had faced sexual assault allegations at Providence, and the state of Oregon does not require colleges to note such offenses on transcripts.

All three Oregon players have since transferred to play basketball at other colleges, despite the widespread media coverage of their suspension. Last season, Alcorn State University’s football team included two players who had left their previous colleges after being accused of sexual assault. Both were high-profile cases, but neither player had trouble finding a new team to play for.

In June, the Southeastern Conference became the first athletic conference to announce it would no longer allow its members to accept transfer athletes with histories of domestic and sexual violence. The new policy states that any athletes who have been subject to official university disciplinary action for "serious misconduct," such as domestic abuse and sexual assault, at another college are not eligible for athletically related financial aid, practice or competition at an SEC program. If an athlete is later proven to be innocent, a waiver can be granted to the student.

Currently, no colleges in the SEC are required to note on transcripts if a student was found responsible for sexual misconduct.

Laura Dunn, executive director of SurvJustice, said colleges could continue to ignore the allegations even if they were required to appear on transcripts, but putting those charges “front and center” would mean colleges
are more liable in the event that an offender assaults a student on their campus. Knowing they couldn’t claim ignorance, she said, could pressure institutions to act on what they learn from a transcript.

“There are realities of repeat perpetration and a school is exposing itself to risk in selecting a student with such a known history,” Dunn said. “I think colleges could still ignore it, just like it can choose to hire individuals with known previous convictions, but the liability is a reality that will deter many schools from making such choices.”

July 10, 2015

Caught Between a Cap on Tuition Increases and Cuts in State Aid

By Katherine Mangan

**NO MU MENTION**

Michigan’s public universities have complained for years about being underfunded, but there was one hoop that two of them weren’t willing to jump through this year to earn every last dollar of their state appropriations.

That move was to limit their tuition increases to 3.2 percent, as the governor and lawmakers eager to score political points with constituents tried to require of them.

Instead, Oakland University and Eastern Michigan University raised their tuition rates for the coming year by about 8 percent. The money they’d get from the extra tuition, they figured, was about 10 times what they’d forfeit in performance-based funding as a consequence of exceeding the state’s cap on tuition increases.

The backlash from students and lawmakers was predictable and swift, but leaders of both universities said the state had left them little choice after years of eroded support. Public money accounted for 71 percent of Oakland’s budget in 1972, but it will make up just 16 percent in 2016, university officials said. The university, they added, receives the lowest level of public support per student in the state — $2,903 in 2016, compared with a state average of $5,182.

Across the country, similar patterns are occurring in states that have disinvested in higher education while pressuring colleges to keep a lid on costs, often through tuition caps. Colleges are chafing at the restrictions, which they say make it impossible for them to keep up with their own rising expenses.

Despite glimmers of hope that state spending may be increasing, the pressure to contain costs remains intense. And in Michigan, state appropriations remain 19 percent below their level five years ago, according to a recent report by the State Higher Education Executive Officers.

"When state funding is cut, tuition is one of the few levers we have to pull," George W. Hynd, Oakland’s president, said in an interview on Thursday.
"It’s a sad commentary that today the state corrections system is funded at a higher level than higher education," he added. The university needs the money for a recently approved strategic plan that calls for building improvements and new faculty and staff hires, he said.

State Sen. Tonya Schuitmaker, a Republican who leads the Senate subcommittee that oversees higher-education appropriations, wasn’t buying that argument.

"It’s disappointing that we have a university choosing to increase the financial burdens on their students rather than operate more efficiently," she wrote in a prepared statement. "This year Oakland University received a 2.6-percent increase in state funding, and the tuition cap allowed them to increase tuition by twice the rate of inflation."

Eleven other universities got smaller increases and still stayed within the cap, added Ms. Schuitmaker, who had previously criticized Eastern Michigan University for its move. One of her goals is making college affordable, she said, "and it’s disappointing when universities don’t seem to share the same goal."

Gov. Rick Snyder also pointed out, in a written statement, that all of the state’s other universities had stayed within the cap.

Bucking the Legislature

The tuition increases in Michigan raise questions about whether such limits, imposed in a growing number of states, really have teeth when universities can choose to ignore them. Michigan’s decentralized system of higher education gives universities more leeway than public colleges in other states to set their own tuition rates.

And in most states, universities, or the boards of higher education that regulate them, will agree to a tuition cap rather than upset lawmakers who hold their fraying purse strings, said Dustin Weeden, a policy specialist with the National Conference of State Legislatures.

"I would guess most institutions go along with them to maintain a positive relationship with legislatures," waiting until the next round of budget negotiations to restate their cases, he said. "If an institution wants to raise tuition by 5 percent but the cap is 3 percent, is the additional revenue worth picking a fight with the legislature?"

In Michigan, it apparently was.

On Tuesday, Oakland’s Board of Trustees voted to increase tuition for the coming academic year by 8.48 percent, or $30 per credit for in-state freshmen. It also created a differential-tuition structure for academic programs, like nursing and engineering, that are in high demand and are more expensive to deliver.

By doing so, it forfeited $1.2 million in "performance-based funding" that was available only if universities kept their increases under 3.2 percent. But the move will generate about $12 million more tuition dollars than the university would have received if it had remained under the cap, university officials said.

The vote came three weeks after Eastern Michigan’s Board of Regents raised its tuition by 7.8 percent. There, too, the $1 million in state incentive pay the university forfeited will be more than offset by the $10 million in added tuition revenue it will receive, according to Geoff Larcom, a university spokesman.

In a news release last month, Mr. Larcom said that over the past six years, Eastern Michigan had kept annual tuition increases under 4 percent despite cuts in state support and that it remained one of the most affordable universities in the state. "We were practicing tuition restraint before there was a state cap," he said.
Both Eastern Michigan and Oakland also pointed out that some of the money generated by the tuition increases will pay for additional financial aid for their steadily growing student bodies.

The only university that has exceeded the state’s tuition cap in the past is Wayne State University, which two years ago raised its tuition by 8.9 percent. That increase provided it with an additional $7 million in tuition revenue.

Other States’ Approaches

Other states’ tuition caps are not always especially restrictive; a few years ago, Florida's and Colorado’s caps were 15 percent and 9 percent, respectively, Mr. Weeden said. Those have dropped to about 6 percent.

In Missouri, by contrast, colleges that raise tuition beyond the level of inflation have to return 5 percent of their state appropriations, although waivers are occasionally granted, Mr. Weeden said.

Kansas lawmakers this year ordered the six state universities governed by the Kansas Board of Regents to cap tuition increases at 3.6 percent. The regents did so, reluctantly, last month as part of a deal that spared the universities steep budget cuts.

"The Board of Regents maintains that the responsibility for setting tuition and fees at state universities is the responsibility of the board," Shane Bangerter, who recently became the board’s chair, said in a statement released by the board in June. "However," he added, "we are appreciative to legislative leadership, and the legislature as a whole, for holding higher-education funding flat during this difficult budget year."

Colleges in Cuba, US build ties as diplomatic tensions ease

July 10, 2015 • By COLLIN BINKLEY

BOSTON (AP) — As the U.S. and Cuba mend ties, colleges in both countries are forming partnerships that once were heavily restricted.

Only months after the U.S. eased travel restrictions, several colleges have struck agreements with Cuban schools to create exchange programs for students and faculty. More American colleges are planning study trips to Cuba, and both sides are exploring research projects.
"I think there’s going to be an explosion in all of those kinds of collaborations,” said Mauro Guillen, director of the Lauder Institute for Management and International Studies at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School.

At Auburn University in Alabama, the college of agriculture agreed to partner with the Agrarian University of Havana under a new five-year exchange agreement. The University of the District of Columbia and the University of California at Fullerton also signed deals with Cuban schools.

Leaders at Florida International University are making long-term plans to open at least one campus in Cuba.

Under previous travel rules, some colleges had gained permission to launch academic trips to Cuba, but college officials said the process was riddled with bureaucratic barriers. Even those who went through the lengthy application process often were denied.

But the U.S. eased those rules this year. Tourism is still forbidden, but the new rules make it easier to travel for educational purposes.

Those changes have stirred a "gold rush mentality” to form new academic ties, said Bruce Magid, dean of the Brandeis International Business School in Waltham, Massachusetts.

"I think it's going to be significantly easier to plan trips," said Magid, who has led several visits to Cuba in recent years.

The wave of academic interest in Cuba covers a wide range of fields, from architecture to agriculture. But business schools in particular have been quick to build ties with the island, both to study its evolving economy and to explore it as a potential business frontier if the U.S. lifts its trade embargo.

"A lot of my students, they want to go to Cuba not just because they can learn about this fascinating place, but they also see themselves potentially in the very near future doing business over there,” said Guillen, who has led student trips to Cuba.

For many U.S. colleges, Cuba also represents a largely untapped pool of future students.

There are still obstacles in the way, but admissions offices already are drafting plans to recruit students from Cuba, just like they do from Europe or South America.

The Educational Testing Service, which administers the graduate record exam in the U.S., recently announced that it will begin testing in Cuba.

"Cuba has probably the highest educational standards in all of Latin America," Guillen said. "They have a relatively well-educated population and it would be wonderful to attract those students to the United States in big numbers."

Financial constraints in Cuba would leave most students dependent on financial aid, but there is strong interest in a U.S. education.

"Here we take two years of English, so in terms of the language I think we are well-prepared," said Omar Concepcion, who is in his last year in physics at the University of Havana, "and on the physics side (Americans) are very advanced, so it would be very advantageous for us."

Colleges acknowledged that they would have to provide financial aid to Cuban students they recruit.
Despite progress, some experts are reluctant to herald a new era of open academic exchange between the countries. In many ways, there is still a wide void between them, said Jorge Duany, director of the Cuban Research Institute at Florida International University.

The U.S. trade embargo puts a clamp on much activity, Duany said, and could block professors from presenting or selling their scholarly works. He added that in Cuba, the state keeps a tight grip on universities and their scholars.

"U.S. academics are used to speaking their minds on any topic that they can think of, and usually nothing happens," Duany said. "Cuba's a different society."

Other constraints include Cuba's lagging infrastructure, Guillen said. Internet access, for example, is still relatively rare, he said. But Guillen is confident that new relationships between colleges will play a role in the larger reconciliation between the countries.

"Educational collaboration and exchange is a consequence of the opening," Guillen said, "but it will also contribute to deepening and accelerating the opening."

July 10, 2015

Court’s Decision Clarifies the Role of Unpaid Internships

NO MU MENTION

By Meg Bernhard

A recent ruling on the legality of unpaid internships may require closer coordination between employers and colleges, experts say.

Last week the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit ruled that unpaid internships may be legal as long as the intern is the "primary beneficiary" of the intern-employer relationship. The ruling also emphasized that the purpose of the internship should be educational.

In highlighting the educational nature of an internship, the court, using strong language, dismissed what it called a "rigid" list of six points used by the Department of Labor to determine whether an internship was legal. Instead, the court presented a set of seven guidelines, in addition to the primary-beneficiary principle, to consider in evaluating internships. The guidelines include "the extent to which the internship is tied to the intern's formal academic work," and the degree to which the internship was similar to an educational environment.

The case involved unpaid interns who sued Fox Searchlight Pictures, alleging the company had violated minimum-wage laws. The appeals court ultimately reversed a lower-court ruling in favor of the plaintiffs, sending the case back to the lower court.
Although the decision was technically a defeat for those advocating against unpaid internships, even some who disagree with the ruling say it brings greater clarity to the purpose of internships. Beth Settje, associate director of the University of Connecticut’s Center for Career Development, said that while she neither agreed nor disagreed with the ruling, "I liked, selfishly, that it talked about how the educational element must be really clear."

Will the decision bring changes to colleges' career offices? Probably not for those that already rigorously scrutinize each internship that comes their way. But many colleges will need to better screen potential internships before advertising them to students or offering academic credit for them. The colleges will also have to work more closely with employers to ensure the internships offer what students expect.

"The school has had to take on a more extended role in reviewing internships," said Edwin Koc, of the National Association of Colleges and Employers. That role could become even more extensive, he said. "Employers themselves may feel they are more comfortable dealing directly with the school," said Mr. Koc, the association’s director for research, public policy, and legislative affairs.

‘The Sticking Point’

The Department of Labor’s six-point system explicitly forbids employers to derive immediate advantages from the position in order for it to be considered an internship. A number of people at colleges' career centers called that stipulation unrealistic.

"That’s always been the sticking point with this six-prong test," said Michael True, a senior associate at Messiah College’s Career and Professional Development Center. Now the emphasis will be on determining who benefits the most from the internship, he said, and if it’s the intern, then it’s legal for the position to be unpaid. Mr. True called that change "revolutionary."

Many college majors require students to complete an internship for credit before they graduate, which suggests that the positions should be related somehow to a student’s coursework. But that is not always the case. Typical intern horror stories involve a summer spent fetching coffee and making photocopies.

"That is not an internship," said Robert Shindell, vice president of the consulting and research firm Intern Bridge Inc. "That is a part-time job."

To screen out problematic positions, some colleges exhaustively research each internship before posting it on their websites or agreeing to offer it to students for credit.

At the New York Institute of Technology, Amy Bravo, an assistant dean of career services, said her office sends copies of the Fair Labor Standards Act to for-profit companies that seek to post unpaid internships on the institute’s website, and later contacts them with tips on how to get postings approved. "Constant communication" with employers is vital, she said.

But often the onus of finding an internship and getting approval for academic credit rests with the student. And some colleges, like American University, post so many jobs and internships — about 13,000 last year, according to Gihan Fernando, executive director of the university’s career center — that it’s impossible to review each one.

Chris Howell, who has coordinated internships at the UCLA Career Center, said employers will increasingly look to colleges for advice on how to structure internship programs to ensure they are legal.

Both Mr. Howell and UConn’s Ms. Settje said the clear language of the ruling offers colleges greater leverage to push back against employers. "It will help colleges make stronger stances about what they’ll allow to be posted," Ms. Settje said.
Pressure on Colleges

Some observers warned of the ruling’s potential side effects, though. Unpaid internships are still, after all, unpaid, and employers could use the "primary beneficiary" standard to their advantage.

Mr. Koc, of the National Association of Colleges and Employers, said more employers were likely to press colleges to give academic credit for internships as evidence that the students were, in fact, benefiting more than the employers were. "That could short-circuit any challenge to the unpaid internship," he said.

Mr. Fernando, of American University, agreed. "It seems clear if [students] are getting academic credit, it would likely protect the employer to some extent," he said.

Others worry that the ruling comes at a cost to paid internships. For Vadake Narayanan, a professor in the business college at Drexel University who studied internships as part of a Fulbright award, it could be more difficult to persuade an employer to pay its interns if they were already receiving academic credit for their work.

"It will put some burdens on us to rethink the marketing of the interns," he said, adding, however, that most of Drexel’s undergraduates are paid for their internships, and that most of the employers have longstanding relationships with the university through its co-op program.

But with some institutions posting hundreds or even thousands of internships on their websites each year, mistakes are inevitable. Colleges will need to be vigilant and communicative, Mr. True, of Messiah College, said.

"Some schools will need to take a very close look at how they can better serve students or come within the guidelines of this new ruling," he said. The employer, the college, and the student should be linked somehow, through a contract outlining learning outcomes, and have a clear understanding of the internship from the start, he argued. "That way," he added, "everybody will be on the same page."

Another Way Employers Can Reduce Debt Loads

July 10, 2015

By Karen Gross

NO MENTION
Much has been written lately about the growing partnerships between private and public employers and institutions of higher education. This can be seen as a strategy for closing the achievement gap. Yet some have questioned whether these programs truly benefit employees, especially because many of the educational offerings are limited to one prescribed educational provider. What if that one provider is not a good fit for particular employees? What if the educational institution does not offer quality programs or offerings in which the employee has an interest?

Because the devil is in the details in terms of the effect and effectiveness of these partnerships, I have argued that the jury is still out. There certainly are enough concerns that we should be cautious about jumping on the bandwagon. I worry about two particular issues: How many employees will actually take advantage of the benefit and proceed to a degree or a certificate (or is it just window dressing)? And what monies will employees actually need to put on the table themselves (books, fees, portion of the actual tuition, vacation time to visit campus?), and won’t that be a real deterrent to participation?

And there is the ongoing issue of quality, as measured by both the employees and the employers. Is what is being taught/learned valuable to the employer, and is the employee receiving the best adult education available, with state-of-the-art andragogy?

Here is another idea that deserves some attention and has not been pursued rigorously in the private sector, to the best of my knowledge: instead of paying for prospective education, what if employers helped employees repay (or at least pay down) their existing student debt?

The suggested approach here accomplishes two goals that are high on the education priority list: (1) college completion for those who have stopped or dropped out and are deterred by existing debt loads, and (2) high debt levels for graduates who cannot see their way clear to participate more actively in our economy through home purchases, car purchases, marriage with or without children, and community activities.

Employer repayment initiatives are different from public service loan forgiveness and income-based repayment. Most public loan forgiveness mandates employment for at least 10 years (for teaching, it is five years) in one of the permitted positions like policing, nursing and military service in areas with hostility. Employment in for-profit positions (such as banking, business or law firms) is clearly not within the ambit of these programs. Income-based repayment does not eliminate the debt totally until decades into the future. The impact on one’s credit score remains unclear for both programs, in my view.

So, we know default rates are high and rising. We know that student debt loads impact when graduates make certain purchases, such as cars and homes, which are key to our nation’s economic stability. We know that some weddings are deferred and some career choices are impacted dramatically by prospective earnings -- not necessarily negative, but it does lead to impaired choice. And the debt is also affecting graduates’ savings for retirement. It also is burdensome psychologically for many students -- notwithstanding Lee Siegel’s cavalier attitude toward default, nonpayment and marrying well.

There is no one magic formula for how this program could be implemented by employers. Here are some possibilities.

Employers could pay a portion of their employees’ proven student debts after a certain number of months (or years) employed. This could apply to those students with an earned degree or perhaps expanded to those who stopped or dropped out. Say employers repaid 5 percent of debt after one year of employment and each year thereafter. Repayment amounts could be graduated up or down over time. The amount repaid could be capped at a predetermined dollar amount.

Or employers could actually pay a certain fixed sum on the existing student debt. If that number were small, then capping might not be needed.
Of course, the tax treatment of this benefit would need to be considered and factored into the structure created. Suppose, too, that with this benefit, there was an employee commitment to work for the employer for a preset number of years (say, five). We do not allow forced employment and mandatory injunctions -- yes, we cannot make the opera singer sing. So those employees who left could find they owed the employer the amounts already paid for student loan debt repayment. There would certainly be employer debt collection costs, too, if this occurred.

Several key features that are positive and make this approach doable: the employer would pay the government or the private lender directly. The employee would receive proof. To ease administrative burdens, the payments could be made biannually. Now, this program could allow employers to hire competitively and graduates might be steered to employers offering this benefit. Perhaps certain industries in need of quality employees could be the thought leaders on this.

Consider, too, the psychological benefits for employees who see their loan balances reducing. Their focus on work-related issues could increase. Educational institutions would benefit, as their default rates would be reduced, and that would positively impact their prospective students’ eligibility to access federal student aid.

As with many benefits, the loan repayment program will not necessarily have value to all employees, such as those with no student debt. That is true for other employee benefits, like tuition for children of employees (not helpful if you have no children) or health insurance that some get from their partner/spouse.

But here are ways the loan repayment program could be expanded: it could cover Parent Plus Loans or other loans to enable employee parents to repay the loans they undertook for their children. Or, for those with no debt, there could be the offering of educational benefits to the parents (who could need a graduate or undergraduate degree) at a comparable level.

My point is this: student debt is capturing the news. The current answers focus primarily on two approaches: government-offered repayment options that take years to satisfy (and where the uptake is not matching eligibility in part due to information asymmetry, although efforts are being made to improve this), or free -- perhaps almost free -- college tuition at public and hopefully other institutions, with different bells and whistles depending on who (including presidential candidates) is making the proposal.

But the latter suggestion -- despite much to be said in its favor -- does not affect current student debt loads of graduates holding a wide range of jobs, in and outside the public sector. The free approach is prospective looking, which is valuable but far from immediate even if enacted today. But we have millions of students now who owe trillions of dollars. This employer benefit approach could help these graduates across the job categories (or perhaps those who stopped or dropped out) in short order. Not a bad benefit for everyone -- employees, employers, the government, educational institutions, our economy.

It is a relatively immediate multiple win-win-win and worth benefit specialists' and economists' consideration, ASAP.